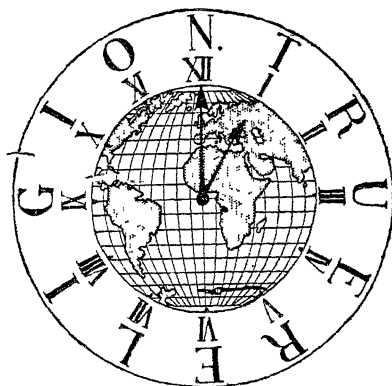


THE GLORY OF THE LIVING SUN

A WORLD-WIDE APPEAL TO REPLACE PRESENT SUPER-
STITIOUS CREEDS BY GENUINE RELIGION WHICH MUST BE

TRUE
Rational
Universal
Exalting

By
A. C. E. R.



The world at one in TRUE religion

HEATH CRANTON LIMITED
6 FLEET LANE, LONDON E.C.4

1935

DEDICATED TO
MY SISTER
WHO,
AFTER A CREEDLESS LIFE
OF NOBLE SELF-DENIAL,
PASSED
GLADLY AND PEACEFULLY
INTO
THE GLORY OF THE LIVING SUN.

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FOREWORD

“WHAT is truth?” said the harassed Roman governor (John 18. 38) and, without waiting for a reply, turned his back on the truth-revealer, thus setting an example which has been faithfully followed by Christendom from that time to the present day. . . .

This book is a plain outspoken attempt to show that, while the answer to this question can never be more clearly or beautifully expressed than in the pure teaching of Jesus, yet it was, in the main, world-widely known thousands of years before he was born—that his version of it has, like himself, been woefully betrayed, denied, and forsaken by his professing followers, throughout the whole Christian era—and that now, though “hidden from the wise and understanding”, it is fully confirmed by rational deductions from the most reliable scientific data of all kinds.

PART I

TRUE

THE ORIGINAL FOUNDATIONS OF TRUE RELIGION

“ I¹ dreamed
That stone by stone I rear’d a sacred fane
A temple neither Pagod’ Mosque nor Church
But loftier, simpler, always open-door’d
To every breath from heaven,—and Truth and Peace
And Love and Justice came and dwelt therein ;

And those that follow’d loosen stone from stone
All my fair work ; and from the ruin arose
The shriek and curse of trampled millions, even
As in the time before ; but while I groaned,
From out the sunset pour’d an alien race
Who fitted stone to stone again, and Truth
Peace, Love, and Justice came and dwelt therein.”
(TENNYSON—“ Akbar’s Dream ”.)

¹ For the purpose of this book the above words may be considered as spoken by Jesus of Nazareth, since they are perhaps even more appropriate in his mouth than in that of the great Mogul emperor Akbar.

CHAPTER I

TRUE

A view of what is "commonly called genesis" in TRUE form

- "Behold thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in
• the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom" (Ps. 51. 6).

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was waste and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep" (Gen. 1. 1, 2). This terse and vivid description of primitive desolation may well be contrasted with the Psalmist's appreciation, "The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth his handiwork" (Ps. 19. 1). Cosmic evolution bridges the gap between these two statements, and we propose to follow the path traced by the creative power in transforming primeval chaos into a well-ordered universe, *with the constant object in our mind of ascertaining ultimately the nature and purpose of this dominating power and our relation thereto, thus establishing the original foundations of true religion*: This object invests the following, perhaps otherwise dull, story of evolution with a strangely fascinating interest. To the ordinary unscientific mind the word evolution means the question of man's descent from monkeys, while the biologist applies the term to the development of all forms of life from simple types into the most complex—and we shall devote particular attention to this aspect as it leads up naturally to our own human existence, and to our thinking minds, which alone of all creation appear to have produced, and to be influenced by, religious ideas—but in reality evolution perpetually exercises its controlling sway over every particle of matter, animate and inanimate, throughout the entire universe, as shown by the results of recent scientific investigations, amply confirmed by philosophical considerations and biblical testimony.

"*The earth was waste and void*": before considering the evolution of living beings, the evolution of inanimate matter must be traced from its original source. There are about ninety known elementary substances of which the universe is formed, and all these are composed of what were formerly considered to be indivisible portions, hence called atoms, now regarded as consisting of varying numbers of ultimate particles or electrons, rapidly revolving round a central nucleus. If the atoms of an element cohere closely together they form a solid body, if more widely separated they

produce a liquid, and if still more widely diffused they exist as gas, and by the application of cold and pressure, gaseous elements become liquid, and liquid elements turn solid, while conversely the action of heat transforms solids, first into liquids, and then into gases. On our inert and stable globe these changes occur either naturally, as when volcanic action melts solid rocks, or they can be produced artificially, but such changes do not in any way affect the composition of the elementary atoms themselves. Recent investigations, however, have shown that vastly different conditions prevail in the interior of the sun and distant stars, where matter is subjected to enormous pressures, to amazingly high temperatures—measured by hundreds of millions, but not exceeding one thousand million degrees¹—and to the violent action of high frequency radiation generated by this “fervent heat”: even the most obstinate atom must yield to such destructive influences (2 Peter 3. 10, 12), and matter in the interior of these glowing orbs must be disintegrated into its component electrons. Appalling as these intra-stellar conditions are, they can only very feebly suggest the utterly inconceivable nature of the disruptive forces that existed when all the innumerable suns, stars, and nebulae, scattered like dust over the heavens, reinforced by all the heat and radiation they have emanated in the course of the ages, were concentrated into one colossal primeval chaos, attaining a state of super-heat equivalent to a temperature, reckoned not by hundreds or thousands of millions, but billions, of degrees. Under such conditions matter could not possibly have existed,² its ultimate particles would have been dissipated and transformed into radiation,—and with the non-existence of matter there appears “the beginning” when the world was in very truth “waste and void”. Further the various physical forces, heat, electricity, chemical action, etc., that act on matter, were all likewise non-existent, as such, in creation’s crucible, being merged in the all-pervading primary radiation of the Void, so that, for example, this short wave radiation was incapable of producing visible light, and consequently “darkness was upon the face of the deep” (Gen. 1. 2).

This vibrating essence of matter and physical force, by unremitting radiation throughout measureless periods of time, became reduced to a state where it could no longer maintain its disruptive action, and finally resolved itself into its components, into ultimate particles of matter charged with electricity, into violent rotary motion, into a heat so intense that the whirling electrons were utterly unable to assume atomic form—in fact into the

¹ This statement rests on the authority of a most inspiring article by Sir James Jeans forming the supplement to *Nature*, December 4th, 1926: the *Ibid* footnotes of this section all refer to this source.

² “Calculation shows that the temperature necessary to influence the rate of sub-atomic annihilation of matter is of the order of 7,500,000 million degrees,” *Ibid*. p. 36.

present intra-stellar state, as described above from considerations "based on incontrovertible scientific grounds":¹ and so "the Spirit of God *moved*" preparatory to creation. After long continued cooling the stage was reached where the electrons assembled themselves into their atomic systems, gaseous elements were formed and chemical action became possible with the result that the still rarefied and attenuated gases showed first a scarcely luminous haze, increasing subsequently to a definite fire mist, the primitive revolving nebula—"And there was light"; not the brilliant light of the, as yet, unformed suns and stars, but a diffused luminosity that "divided the light from the darkness" (Gen. i. 4).

Just as a great rolling thundercloud transforms its surcharged vapour into water that falls in showers of separate globular rain-drops, so the vast revolving cosmic fire mist became disseminated into immense whirling wisps, which, by further condensation and disintegration, bestrewed the entire heavens with nebular spheres—potential suns and solar systems—all betraying their common origin by continuing to revolve, as at the present day, in one and the same original direction. These newly-formed nebular suns being in a highly unstable condition must have been subject to Titanic upheavals and surgings, which, aided by the attractive force of neighbouring masses, resulted in the extrusion of large fragments from their surfaces. These comparatively small masses rapidly became reduced to a molten state, and under the influence of various forces, assumed a spheroidal shape with a rotatory motion and a circular or elliptical orbit of revolution round the parent sun, thus forming the planets of a solar system. Such a body was our globe, which, owing to its small size and its great distance from the sun, must have cooled down comparatively rapidly after it had settled into the path of its orbit. Cooled down till its surface formed a firm hard crust of igneous rock, cooled down till the dense masses of steaming clouds, with which it was surrounded, condensed into mighty floods of water, cooled down till the superficial crust lying beneath this deluge contracted into great folds and wrinkles, the summits of which, upheaved by volcanic action, above the level of the water, formed continents and islands of dry land, while the water collecting in the intervening hollows formed oceans and seas: "And God said Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so" (Gen. i. 9).

ORIGIN OF LIFE

With the appearance of the earth in habitable form we find ourselves face to face with the problem of the origin of life, usually regarded as the greatest mystery of creation, though in reality it

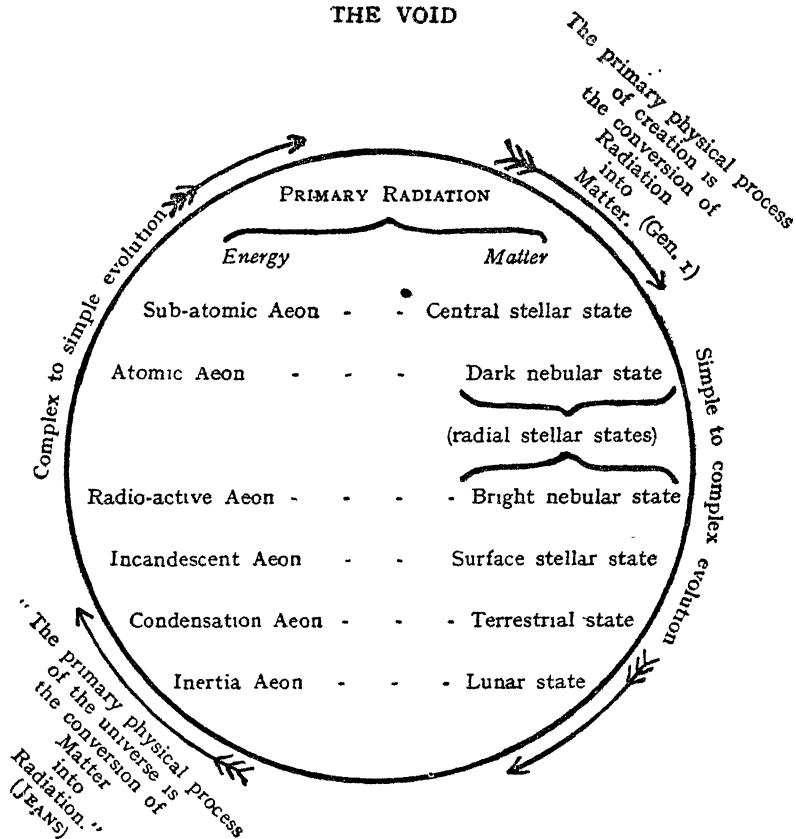
¹ *Ibid.* p. 30.

is no more a mystery than any of the other evolutionary processes that preceded it, since it is merely a repetition of these, just as they are repetitions of each other, all alike being capable of a precisely similar explanation. A brief recapitulation, aided by a familiar illustration, should show clearly that this life-forming process is at least a perfectly natural, if not an actually inevitable, sequence to the previous stages of evolution. Let us take the illustration first, as it will enable the unscientific reader to grasp easily, not only the summary of what has just been described, but also the universal principle involved therein, and its particular application in explaining the origin and development of life. If water half filling a glass flask be heated to boiling point, the upper half of the flask becomes filled with invisible water vapour, kept in this condition by the heat it has absorbed in the boiling, but when this vapour escapes through the mouth of the flask into the cooler air it loses some of its heat, and then appears as a fine mist of visible steam, which is still too hot to form liquid water. Take away more heat by letting the steam impinge on a cooler substance, and at once the steam condenses into ordinary warm water, and note particularly that although heat, in an intense form, prevented the water vapour becoming liquid, yet it is this heat, when reduced, that maintains the water in a liquid state, for if all its heat be taken away from water it turns into solid ice; and of course the process is reversible, the addition of energy in the form of heat converting, step by step, the inert solid ice into fiercely active invisible water vapour. Now all this is not a mere simile or analogy but an actual example of the effect of energy on matter generally; for our present purpose at least the process is precisely the same in this simple change of solid ice into an invisible scalding vapour, or in volcanic action turning the solid matter of our earth into streams of molten lava and clouds of incandescent gases, or in the transformation of all the matter of the universe into primary radiation, and vice versa—so we may now summarize our preceding description of the last process along the same lines.

Primary radiation by expending part of its amazing energy permitted the ultimate particles of matter to appear, and thus became reduced to a form of radiation which maintained the resulting nuclei and electrons in such a completely dissociated condition that atom formation was quite impossible (central stellar state).¹ Then this secondary radiation in its turn yielded up energy and so became reduced to a tertiary radiation which allowed the ultimate particles to approximate and assume more or less complete atomic form (nebular or radial stellar state). By further loss of energy this tertiary radiation became reduced to the state of incandescent heat, in which atoms could exist comfortably but

¹ *Ibid.* p. 31.

THE VOID



THE UNIVERSE

Diagram of Cosmic Evolution

molecules¹ only, with difficulty representing a very few chemical compounds (surface stellar state). Finally by loss of radiant heat, the formation of liquid and solid matter, and innumerable stable compounds, became possible (terrestrial state). It should be noted that each stage is simply a progressive readjustment of balance between forming matter and diminishing energy taking place thus: (1) *Matter—every successive diminution of energy allowed the particles of matter to draw more closely together and assume a more stable form with corresponding reduction in activity; and (2) Energy—each new change of matter only appeared under the influence of a form of radiation that would at first have annihilated it, but that, when toned down, supplied the energy appropriate to the new form of matter and maintained it in this condition till further redistribution of energy resulted in another change of state.* In radio-active substances, e.g. radium, we have in fact before our eyes a perfectly natural example of this progressive emission of energy, resulting in the production of a graduated series of stable forms of matter. If we could imitate this process on a small scale we ought to be able to produce at will new forms of matter, and by so doing prove incontestably the truth of this general principle: this is exactly what is constantly being done during chemical investigations into the composition of matter. For this purpose the chemist first restores his materials to the unstable conditions in which they existed in nature's melting pot, by submitting them to some disruptive agency, heat, electricity, or simply solution in water, etc. In this dissociated condition the elements of the substances employed are able to draw together into new combinations, which are then stabilized by the emission of energy involved in the process: sometimes as in the case of the electric battery it is this emitted energy which is desired, in other cases conditions are so arranged that energy is given off as little as possible, remaining instead latent in the new substances formed, which are then highly active explosives, only becoming stable after their energy is released by detonation; usually however, the chemical process is brought at once to its natural completion in the formation of various stable substances, which are then separated by appropriate means and their properties examined and utilized. By thus imitating the natural process of evolution as described above, the chemist frequently "creates" artificially, different and perhaps hitherto quite unknown combinations of matter. Let us apply this general principle to the further course of evolution, but concentrating our attention now on the matter and energy most intimately associated with the formation of life on our earth.

Living Matter.—The gradual cooling down of the earth's surface

¹ Chemical compounds are formed by the combination of two or more elements, consequently their minutest conceivable particles must be composed of two or more atoms united together into "little masses", hence called "molecules".

enabled the various elements of matter to sort themselves out and form more or less stable substances, each with constant physical and chemical characters, linked up with some particular form of natural force. Taking for example the elements that compose the living tissues of plants and animals, we have the gas *Oxygen*, which forms approximately $\frac{1}{5}$ th of our air, able to unite with each of the other elements, being thus the chief agent in chemical action and energy liberation as just described. When the common solid element *Carbon* unites with oxygen it produces heat and gives off carbonic acid gas, consequently it is the principal constituent of fuel for fires, and of food for heating and nourishing animal tissues, which are largely composed of it, the resulting carbonic acid gas being in this case exhaled from the animal's lungs. Next the very light gas *Hydrogen* united electrically with oxygen forms water which constitutes as much as 90% of some living tissues, in which by its almost universal solvent action it greatly aids all the chemical processes incidental to life. Then the inert gas *Nitrogen* forming the remaining $\frac{4}{5}$ ths of our air enters into very unstable combination with many elements thus producing highly energetic and explosive substances—it is an essential constituent of contractile muscle tissues. Lastly, brain tissue contains small quantities of the yellow solid *Phosphorus*, the light bearer as its name implies, which is so greedy of oxygen that mere contact with the air causes it to burst into a flame of intense white light. These are the main components of living tissues, and one would naturally expect elements with such active, varied, and opposite characters to prove mutually attractive when in a nascent condition, if they followed the ordinary evolutionary course as defined above, they ought to have united together into some stable substance, and the crude forces associated with them in their uncombined state should have been correspondingly reduced in activity. Now this exactly expresses what happened when these nascent elements united to form the jelly-like substance called "protoplasm", or "first tissue", which is the material basis of all life, both plant and animal; their elementary energy that produced powerful chemical actions resulting in violent explosions, electrical phenomena, blazing fire, and brilliant light, became reduced to the physiological processes associated with digestion, nutrition, and growth, producing thereby muscular power, nerve force, animal heat, and generally all the ordinary manifestations of life. It is curious to observe how these subdued vital activities occasionally break out into strange reversions to their ancestral forces; witness the vigorous electric shocks generated by the muscles of so-called electric eels, torpedo fish etc., the brilliant luminosity emitted by some bacteria, by marine animalcules and deep sea fauna generally, as well as by some soft-skinned beetles, and strangest of all perhaps the extraordinary detonating discharges ejected in self defence by the small Bombardier beetles. Although

spontaneous combustion of living tissues does not occur, yet inflammatory and febrile conditions are very easily provoked, giving rise to an abnormal increase of body temperature, high enough at times to prove fatal.

It is true that protoplasm is a highly complicated substance, endowed with very wonderful properties, and that it cannot at present be prepared artificially even as a dead jelly, but it must be remembered that, less than a century ago, it was firmly believed that all substances occurring in plants and animals were only formed under the influence of vital forces, and could not be built up in the laboratory. Organic chemistry, however, by effecting the synthesis of large numbers of such substances has completely disproved this vitalist dogma, and we now know it to be an "indubitable fact that the same laws of chemical combination prevail in both the animate and inanimate kingdoms, and that the artificial or laboratory synthesis of any substance, either inorganic or organic, is but a question of time, once its constitution is determined".¹ But though as will be seen presently the conditions necessary for the natural formation of protoplasmic jelly may never again be realized on this earth, nor its artificial production be accomplished, yet this does not at all imply that there is anything supernatural connected with this substance. On the contrary we know it to be composed of very common forms of elementary matter united together apparently quite naturally, and the resulting substance in its chemical composition, general behaviour, and ordinary activities, presents exactly the modifications to be expected from a combination of such component elements: so far then as the mere material basis of life is concerned, we are justified in concluding that it is an entirely normal product, formed strictly in accordance with the unvarying physico-chemical principles governing the evolution of all kinds of matter. It must now be ascertained whether a similar remark applies to the vital energy that animates this matter.

Vital Energy.—The cosmic forces with which we have dealt so far are all precisely the same as those physical forces which exist on our earth, where we can produce, control, and examine them at will. Even the naked savage in Central Australia, who is still in the Stone Age period of his evolution, can obtain fire by forming a little hollow in a piece of soft wood, filling this with dry tinder, and then rotating the end of a hard wood rod in this depression: the friction causes electro-chemical action that sets the tinder afire, producing light and heat, thus generating four kinds of physical force—feeble indeed yet identical in all respects with the cosmic forces previously considered. But life seems entirely different: we know no form nor any certain manifestation of life outside our own earth, and here it always arises from previous life, never appear-

¹ *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 11th ed., vol. VI, p. 48.

ing spontaneously under present conditions, nor can it be produced artificially, while any attempt to analyse it at once causes it to vanish, leaving its dead medium behind it. How then can we possibly form any idea of its origin and nature? Ask the savage what is the origin of his fire and he will at once reply that it was a spirit in the two sticks—an answer due to ignorance which always attributes the marvellous unknown to supernatural causes. Ask even educated people concerning the nature of the life within them, and they will usually give somewhat the same answer as the savage, and for the same reason. The true explanation of the savage's fire is, of course, that his own vital energy in the form of muscular power, applied in rotating the stick, has been transformed into the other physical forces concerned. This is simply another instance of the apparently mysterious vital energy expressing itself in the form of some ordinary physical force, thus indicating that there is nothing at all supernatural about it, and that, consequently, it should conform in all respects to the general evolutionary process dominating the natural world throughout all time. This being so, then the true origin and nature of life should appear if we take the second part of the universally applicable evolutionary principle already stated (p. 18), and apply it to the case of newly forming life, re-stating it in terms of living matter and vital energy; thus, putting the universal rule and its particular application side by side for comparison:—

Universal principle found applicable to all matter in all stages of its evolution.

“Each new change of matter only appeared under the influence of a form of radiation that would at first have annihilated it, but that, when toned down, supplied the energy appropriate to the new form of matter, and maintained it in this condition till a further re-disposition of energy resulted in another change of state.”

Same principle re-stated as applied to living matter and vital energy.

The newly-formed protoplasmic basis of life can only have appeared under the influence of a form of radiation that would at first have annihilated it, but that, when toned down, supplied the energy appropriate to the nascent life, and maintained it in this state till further re-disposition of energy resulted in new forms of life.

Now the energy that maintains all forms of life on the earth is, simply, the radiation from our sun, which is literally the breath of life to every green herb and to all animals: it is through the action of the sun's rays that the green colouring matter of plants is able to break up the carbonic acid gas, exhaled by animals, into the carbon of the plant tissue and the free oxygen of the air, both

of which in turn are essential to animal life: the sundial motto "Sine sole sileo" ("Without the sun I am silent"), is in fact equally true of all life on the earth. We no longer imagine that "the sun breeds maggots in a dead dog being a god kissing carrion", but so marvellous are its stimulating powers, and so withering and stunting the effects on life deprived of it, that we may well believe that if its rays were somewhat more potent they would indeed be able to create life. And, *according to our rule, life must have originated under the influence of a more powerful form of this solar radiation*, so potent in fact as to have been life-destroying until toned down to what may be called "vitality point", at which the first sparks of life appeared. That the origin of life accords strictly with the natural universal evolutionary process common to all other forms of matter and energy, appears to be actually proved by the following considerations.

We have already seen that the earth was extruded from the sun after this latter had separated from the primitive nebula and was still in a highly unstable nebular state: now just as a glowing cinder expelled from a furnace cools down in a few minutes, while the large fire continues to burn unaltered, so, too, during the comparatively short time occupied by our relatively small earth in cooling down, the massive nebular sun underwent scarcely any change. Consequently it would appear that the radiation which vitalized the primordial germs of life on the earth consisted of nebular emanations, and not the ordinary temperature radiation of our present highly luminous sun; the difference between these, so important for our immediate purpose, is very clearly described by Jeans.¹ Radiation possessing enormous penetrating power is generated alike in the interior of the sun, stars, and nebulae, but the density of our original nebular sun being very low, this radiation passed out almost unchecked, and so reached the newly-formed crust of the earth in the form of highly penetrating short-wave-length radiation that would instantly have destroyed any life, had such existed there at that time. As the sun became more and more condensed, however, this internal radiation had to pass through an ever thickening veil that softened it by causing it to undergo successive absorptions and remissions, until at the present time the obstruction is such that it emerges from the solar surface as ordinary temperature radiation, which so far from being destructive, is highly stimulating and beneficial to life on the earth. Thus all the evidence, both 'a priori' and 'de facto', clearly indicates that an intensely active form of solar radiation did really exist, that it flooded the surface of the earth during the entire period of transformation from fiery heat to a more or less habitable condition, that consequently it was in operation when the nascent elements appeared and united to form all kinds of

existing matter, including the protoplasmic basis of life, and lastly, that this intense radiation, by the progressive condensation of the superficial layers of the sun, became more and more screened off in such a way that it was gradually reduced from a life-destroying to a life-creating, and then to its present merely life-developing and life-maintaining, activity.

This rational deduction from recent scientific data seems to have been recognized by the early Mesopotamian astronomers and philosophers from whom the Jews got their creation ideas, for in Genesis 1. the hazy radiation of the nebular sun is represented as appearing during the first epoch, but not becoming life-creating till the third æonian day, or the "evening" before it assumed the condition of our highly luminous but merely life-sustaining sun. As we picture this cosmic force acting for ages on the newly forming elements of matter, until by a combination of circumstances the conditions requisite for the formation of the first sparks of life were realized, we can well understand that these conditions can never occur again naturally on this earth, and may never be produced artificially in the future.¹

Earliest forms of life.—Life has thus appeared on the earth, but in what form was it embodied? We should naturally expect that primitive types, formed under the above unpropitious circumstances, would have been highly resistant and vigorous, though simple in structure, but later on they would have developed into more sensitive and complex forms of life, that could only exist when the solar radiation had become still further reduced in intensity, and the environment generally more favourable. Both the biblical version of ancient creation legends, and the teaching of science agree that the creative process advanced stage by stage, beginning with the formation of water, so essential to all forms of life, followed by the appearance of primary vegetation and by the origin of animal life in the water, both plant and animal, as we shall see, commencing with lowly types and gradually advancing to more complex forms, culminating in man whose God-like powers entitled him to dominion over all. It may then be taken as admitted that life on the earth began with the very simplest types, and as the simplest conceivable beings known to us are the microbes, the logical inference is that these probably represent the primordial phase of life on this globe. The following facts may enable those unacquainted with these microscopic forms of life to realize this most strange and interesting truth.

Amongst the many peculiarities possessed by microbes, or "bacteria" ("little rods") as they are more commonly called, the following are important from our present point of view: although these germs of life are so minute that when magnified several

¹ In this connection however it is significant to note the recent synthesis of vitamins by the action of the ultra-violet rays, and the production of variation in seeds under the influence of cosmic rays.

hundred times they look about the size and shape of printed punctuation dots and dashes and commas, yet many produce internal seeds or spores which are the most resistant forms of life known, since they survive prolonged drying or exposure to the temperature of boiling water; even without spore formation some forms are found to grow best at the extraordinarily high temperature of 150° F., while others on the contrary may be exposed for a week to the intense cold of evaporating liquid air without their vitality being in any way affected; lastly they can live on almost anything or nothing, (1) some feeding on purely mineral matter, thus turning dead stone into living flesh, (2) some on dead substances either vegetable or animal, thus cleansing the earth of all putrefactive material, and (3) some on living tissues thereby giving rise to various diseases in animals and plants, these germs of life thus becoming germs of death.

Bearing these facts in mind, consider for a moment the conditions which must have prevailed on our world when it began to be habitable. The earth, originally a molten mass, had cooled down so that its surface consisted of bare igneous rocks without a blade of vegetation anywhere, and the hollows, filled with recently condensed aqueous vapour, formed fresh-water seas and rivers entirely devoid of life. The crust of the earth, still very thin, must have been subject to frequent volcanic upheavals, attended with the emission of devastating streams of lava and clouds of mephitic vapours. Of the climatic conditions we can form little idea, but probably hurricanes of tremendous violence, accompanied by deluges of rain, swept at intervals over the face of all things. The regular sequence of the seasons, and of day and night, not having been properly established, terrible extremes of heat and cold must have succeeded each other with startling rapidity. Think of this chaotic state of things in which the earliest living beings were cradled, and then say what forms of life must these have been which were able to withstand such vicissitudes! Reflect for an instant, and you will see that the mineral feeding microbes, just mentioned, are the only beings we are acquainted with which could have existed on those barren primeval rocks, for they, and they alone, can subsist in the entire absence of all organic matter. Further the modern descendants of these primordial microbes still retain all the resistant characters which would have enabled them to thrive and multiply under the circumstances described—circumstances that would have rapidly proved fatal to all other known forms of life. Why, we ask, are microbes endowed with the capacity for resisting the temperature of boiling water on the one hand, and a temperature approximating to absolute zero on the other, seeing that in the natural world at the present day they can never be exposed to such conditions? Either we must believe that nature went out of her way to provide these germs with a most exceptional faculty which is utterly useless to them,

or else—what is surely far more probable and intelligible—that the powers of resistance, possessed by microbes at the present day, are inherited from their remote ancestors, to whom, living under vastly different conditions, such powers were essential to existence.¹

That microbes were the earliest forms of life to appear on the earth is confirmed by the fact that their lineal descendants of the present day, although the simplest in structure and most insignificant of all living beings, are yet endowed with amazing stores of vital energy such as we should naturally expect in types representing the actual fountain-head of all life. This vital energy, proportionately far in excess of that possessed by any other forms of life, manifests itself in all their varied activities; thus they reproduce themselves asexually by unlimited subdivision, in this way multiplying at a most prodigious rate; motile forms exhibit an almost bewildering and tireless activity; they produce metabolic substances that are amongst the most powerful ferments and poisons known; they present considerable variability in form foreshadowing the diverse cellular structure of their more complex descendants; and finally they possess an unsurpassed adaptability to environment enabling them to thrive everywhere, thus developing certain special cell characteristics to be described presently, and to transmit these to all other forms of life both plant and animal all over the globe.

Evolution of minute plant and animal life.—Although microbes are classed as plants, yet in many respects they appear to behave exactly like little animals, thus occupying an intermediate position, which rendered their primeval representatives well fitted to become the progenitors of these two main divisions of life, and the following account of their natural development into the lowest types of plants and animals suggests forcibly an impersonal creative power inaugurating the whole scheme of life on the earth, in accordance with the rational principle of universal evolution.

The primordial microbes being the only forms of life existing at first in the primeval world, had “no enemy save winter and rough weather”, and with an unlimited supply of mineral food must have multiplied prodigiously and covered vast areas of the earth with thick layers of slime, composed of living and dead microbes just as they do on any suitable solid nutriment at the present day. As a result of their growth, aided by weathering, large masses of rocks become pulverized into a sandy dust, which, when mixed with the decaying bacterial slime formed a virgin soil, such as was destined eventually to nourish all the varied forms of life on the earth. Further, heavy rains washed off great

¹ The above argument is extracted unaltered from a lecture delivered in a far Eastern city in 1904, and printed in the local press at that time; in the ensuing pages the suggested process of microbic evolution into higher forms of life is now elaborated in detail.

quantities of this slime, thus forming pools of stagnant water rich in albumen and dissolved salts of various kinds, and when certain microbes are grown at the present day in similar albuminous material, e.g. liquid blood serum, they increase considerably in size by surrounding themselves with a broad gelatinous covering layer or capsule, so presenting the appearance of what is called a "cell", of which all animals and plants alike are composed. The lowest forms of life (called Protozoa or "first animals" and Protophyta or "first plants") consist of one such cell only, which discharges all the necessary functions of life, locomotion, nutrition, growth, and reproduction, while all the higher forms (called Metazoa or "after animals" and Metaphyta or "after plants") are composed of many cells, all derived indeed from one fertilized cell or ovum, but varying in size, shape, and functional activity according to the part which each has to play in the plant or animal system.

The typical cell consists of a droplet of clear living jelly or protoplasm, usually delicately skinned over, and containing a more or less concentrated granular portion or 'nucleus', *identical in substance with the material of which ordinary microbes are entirely composed*, both alike enclosing the all-essential deeply-staining (chromatin) grains which act as the vehicle of heredity; in the single-celled plants and animals the nuclear part is the main factor in reproduction, while the outer jelly is concerned with locomotion, nutrition, and resultant growth, subject however to nuclear influence, since enucleated cells cannot continue to exist alive. In microbes, which are ordinarily devoid of this outer jelly, locomotion if present is effected by long hairs called 'flagella' ('whips'), or 'cilia' ('eyelashes') occurring either singly, in tufts, or in a complete shaggy coat.¹ Nutrition takes place simply by diffusion of digestive ferments through the surrounding medium, the nutrient material so prepared being then directly absorbed by the nuclear tissue that forms the entire microbe, which is thus stimulated to such amazing fecundity that one single bacterium may produce countless millions of descendants within twenty-four hours. It is important to note here that these descendants are invariably true to type both as regards form and mode of life, thus round forms, curved and straight rods, reproduce these shapes respectively, motile and spore-bearing types produce their like, as also do the mineral feeding, putrefactive, and parasitic varieties.

We can picture all these distinct kinds arising from the first most simple microbe form through gradual adaptation to varying surroundings, for protoplasm invariably reacts in this way. The primordial germs of life consisting of naked nuclear protoplasm creeping on primeval rocks, having protected themselves by a

¹ These various forms are illustrated in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 11th ed., vol. III, Art. Bacteriology, Fig. 1.

permeable skin, having assumed the forms suitable to their environment, having protruded little locomotory processes, having elaborated the digestive ferments corresponding to their staple article of diet, having produced highly resistant spores during unfavourable conditions of life, or having developed any such special characteristic, naturally transmitted these acquired characters to their descendants; they could scarcely do otherwise since, owing to microbic reproduction taking place by merely swelling and then dividing into two equal parts, the offspring are actually the self-same substance as the parent, and therefore possess exactly identical characters. As long then as these various types of microbes continued in the environment to which they were adapted, they propagated practically unchanged even to the present day, but when the surroundings were altered, as described above, in a way that produced formation of a surrounding gelatinous layer, then a stage was reached enabling the primordial microbes to evolve into primordial cells, from which originated the lowest types of single-celled plants and animals. In fact we have just seen that the material substance of the microbe, which is identical with that of the plant and animal cell nucleus, possessed all the powers of locomotion, nutrition, and reproduction characteristic of the typical cell, so that the capsulated microbes had only to exercise these functions through the medium of the enclosing layer of jelly—thus transforming this into living protoplasm—in order to be in all respects identical with the unicellular plants and animals. As regards this transition into primitive plant forms we need only say in passing that capsulated immobile microbes tend to cohere in pairs, threads, layers, or masses, exactly like the simplest one-celled plants, while many of the lowest forms of vegetable life actually repeat in one life history the various phases, creeping, flagellate, and sporing, which originated in the primordial microbes; there can therefore be no objection to recognizing these latter as prototypes of plants, but the similar relationship of motile bacteria to the lowest forms of animals, being less obvious and especially important for our purpose, must now be dealt with.

The very word animal suggests animation and active movement, consequently when the primordial microbes developed their flagella they had already displayed a preponderantly animal characteristic of such an important nature that it is used as the chief factor in classifying the Protozoa.¹ These unicellular lowest forms of animal life are divided into classes, which, from the standpoint of their evolutionary relation to microbes, might be described thus, (1) Creeping forms, in which the uniformly contractile outer jelly extrudes and retracts temporary projections,

¹ E. A. Mmchin, "Introduction to Protozoa", and Article "Protozoa" *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 11th ed.

(called 'pseudopodia' or 'false feet'), either as a means of locomotion or for capture of food, and thus foreshadow the formation of permanent flagellar processes, (2) Forms possessing one or more free flagella exactly like the motile bacteria. In some of these forms which inhabit blood, a flagellum, embedded in the viscid gelatinous coat, appears by its lashing movement to have drawn out an undulatory fin-like sheet extending the whole length of the body, and tapering into the short free cilium or thread-like end of the flagellum—this indicates such a close approach to the next group that these two classes may be amalgamated. (3) Here the long and very numerous flagella surrounding some microbes have all been thus partially enmeshed in the gelatinous coat, leaving their extremities protruding as short threads or cilia, not long enough, nor strong enough, for complicated lashing movement, but capable of regular to and fro motion, and serving the same double purpose as the pseudopodia. (4) And lastly parasitic forms, living inside higher animals and thus entirely devoid of locomotory powers; these forms reveal their relationship to microbes by adopting their parasitic mode of life, and showing during their life history similar creeping and flagellate phases, culminating in the spore formation which is the special characteristic of this class. It may be added that, just as in the case of the lowest plant types, some Protozoa divide into associated groups or colonies of cells, representing in one life history all the above variations, creeping, flagellate, and spore-forming: these foreshadow the Metazoa.

We have, then, the simplest animals divided into great groups, represented by slowly creeping forms, by active flagellate or ciliate cells, and by a resting spore formation type, all of which appeared as described in the primordial microbes, and were then repeated in the lowest unicellular plants. Further, we may state that all these various forms of cells persist throughout the higher examples of both plant and animal life, the sequence, as might be expected, being particularly characteristic of their reproductive phases, where young germ cells, either creeping or inert, are usually fertilized by active flagellate cells and then develop into the mature reproductive stage, sporocyst, seed, or egg as the case may be: the result is that the immobile human ovum, for example, when thus fertilized, transmits the power of forming creeping cells such as the white blood corpuscles, or flagellate forms such as the spermatozoa, or ciliated cells such as line the air passages. Surely in view of all these data we may quite reasonably conclude that the primordial microbes originally evolved, or at least possessed, the fundamental characteristics of both plant and animal structure, and by surrounding themselves with an outer protoplasmic layer became genuine primordial cells, both immobile and motile, the former developing into unicellular plants and the latter into unicellular animals.

This transition in material form was accompanied by a corresponding redistribution of energy, so that this fundamental example of biotic evolution must be considered from the other standpoint of the cell's functional activity or habitual mode of life, in order to have what is really a complete epitome of the whole subject. The putrefactive and parasitic microbes, being accustomed to feeding on a highly albuminous diet which was in close contact with them, were thus able to surround themselves with a coat of what may be described as 'vitalizable albumen' or jelly—albumen stiffened by microbic ferments—which produced revolutionary changes in their entire mode of life. By this capsulation of the primordial microbe its highly active nuclear substance was no longer stimulated by immediate contact with its like in a richly nutritious medium, and the consequence was its amazing reproductive powers were reduced enormously: thus instead of producing innumerable millions of descendants in twenty-four hours as the bacteria can do, the individual Protozoon is found to die off after about two hundred generations, unless its nutritive medium be artificially enriched by addition of beef extract, etc., or unless natural reinvigoration takes place by fusion of nuclear matter from two distinct individuals; such a proceeding, known as conjugation, is obviously the earliest form of sexual union found universally amongst both animals and plants, and was probably originally established in order to counteract the interference with reproductive power suffered by the germs of life when first enclosed within cell protoplasm.

The situation was this. The primordial microbes only succeeded in maintaining their existence in a very inhospitable primeval world, partly by their extraordinary powers of resistance, and partly by devoting all their available energy to reproduction: under these adverse circumstances the natural purpose of individual growth with evolution into higher forms was quite frustrated, for the microbes had really no 'body' capable of such development, since they consisted entirely of nuclear tissue, devoted almost exclusively to frantic reproduction; but when climatic and general conditions improved, this excessive fecundity became unnecessary in many cases, and had to be curtailed, extreme motility had to be diminished, in fact a corresponding redistribution of energy all round was evidently required, and the deposit of an external albuminous covering, capable of organization into living protoplasm, achieved all the desired objects. Quite mechanically, as we have seen, it partially enmeshed the flagella and at the same time restricted extravagant reproduction to the level maintained by conjugation, while the nuclear energy, so released, was expended in transforming the outer jelly into sensitive protoplasm, and developing therein remarkable powers of metabolism. Under this nuclear influence these primordial cells, as they can now be called, were at last able to grow, their newly-formed

bodies assuming relatively considerable size, and developing the special properties either of plant or animal cells according to circumstances. Thus, some became immobile by enclosing themselves in a covering of cellulose, and then they expended their nuclear energy in forming the green colouring matter—called chlorophyll—by which they were able to extract carbon from the carbonic acid in the air, this being supplemented by absorption of water and its dissolved constituents, thereby establishing the regime of nutrition characteristic of the vegetable kingdom. On the other hand motile forms established the characteristic animal type of nutrition by using the nuclear ferments, retained in the newly-formed protoplasm, to digest the solid food particles engulfed by the creeping pseudopodia of the more primitive naked forms, while in the more highly developed types, where the body is covered by a delicate ciliated skin, there is a special mouth-opening surrounded by cilia which waft the food into a complete miniature digestive apparatus, in every respect comparable with the alimentary system of the most highly organized animals.

SUMMARY

This completes the tale of how the primordial microbes, having evolved all the essential characters of cell form, function, and mode of life, transmitted these to the lowest types of plants and animals, and a summary of the whole process may perhaps elucidate its main points of interest and practical importance. We started with the fact that the unique powers of resistance possessed by microbes indicate their origin during primeval disorder, while the existence of purely mineral feeding types seems to prove clearly their claim to be actually the very first representatives of life on the barren earth. The most primitive creeping forms had to adapt themselves to varying conditions, and naturally transmitted these acquired characters, since reproduction consisted simply in cleavage into two identical halves, consequently they were soon replaced by their better equipped descendants which persist to this day. They began by protecting themselves with a delicate porous skin—thus becoming immobile—and feeding by absorbing matter in solution prepared by their excreted ferments: in other aquatic forms the skin remained perforated in places through which fine pseudopodia passed, these becoming later permanent flagella, or cilia, for swimming purposes; others again developed the faculty of forming spores, no doubt through living under conditions of alternate dryness and moisture. After a time, when great masses of dead bacterial slime had accumulated, other forms learned to prey on this rich nourishment, which naturally resulted in their becoming surrounded with a thick albuminous coat or capsule: this mechanically produced a great

diminution in the activity and reproductive energy of the imprisoned microbe, and a corresponding increase in nutritive power, resulting first in the organization of the albuminous coat into living protoplasm, and then its rapid growth. In some such way was formed that structural basis of all higher forms of life, the typical primordial cell, which being simply a microbe enclosed in a drop of protoplasmic jelly, naturally tended to repeat the above mentioned microbic developments: thus on the one hand some of these primordial cells formed a firm covering of cellulose that rendered them immobile and compelled them to adopt the method of nourishment by absorption of gases and soluble matter, thus becoming primitive unicellular plants, prototypes of the whole vegetable kingdom; on the other hand, different conditions caused other forms to continue actively motile, more favourable environment enabling naked creeping kinds to survive, and to nourish themselves by engulfing and digesting solid organic matter, thus becoming unicellular animals, prototypes of the whole animal kingdom.

Both these divergent types under their common inherited influence alike reproduced themselves by the microbic method of cleavage, aided by conjugation, and thus perpetuated their other special inherited characteristics both of form and function: hence we find numerous examples of lowly forms of life showing in their life history a complete sequence of creeping, flagellate, and sporing stages, we find the innumerable Protozoa actually divided into great classes corresponding to these three main types, while all through the higher plants and animals, particularly in their reproductive phases, there is a frequent recurrence of these fundamental forms, which were first developed by the primordial microbes, and then apparently transmitted by them to everything endowed with life of any kind. Lastly, the best known and most important mode of life acquired by microbes consists in their parasitic existence, whereby they give rise in human beings to such terrible diseases as cholera, plague and tuberculosis, etc., and unfortunately for suffering humanity this faculty also has been transmitted to representatives of all classes of the Protozoa: thus a creeping form is responsible for causing acute dysentery and liver abscess; the previously described flagellate with the undulating fin, has depopulated large districts in Africa by giving rise to the deadly malady 'sleeping sickness', while malaria, the most widespread scourge of tropical countries, is caused by a sporing form, which incidentally presents in its complicated life cycle, perfect examples of all three phases, creeping, flagellate, and sporing.

CONCLUSION

Having regard to all these data we repeat the conclusion that microbes represented the primary phase of life on the earth, that

these primordial germs evolved the main fundamental characteristics of cell-form, function, and mode of life, and by transmitting these—or the ability and tendency to acquire them—to the lowest types of plants and animals, became the progenitors of all forms of life on this earth. And we hold this conclusion to be TRUE because (t) it rests on known bacteriological facts concerning the powers of resistance and of mineral feeding still possessed by some forms of bacteria, (r) it is rational to conclude that the earliest life consisted of the very simplest forms, allied to both plants and animals, and that their extraordinary energy and adaptability enabled these primordial microbes to develop into, and perpetuate, the fully grown type of 'cell', which is the basis of all living structure, vegetable or animal, (u) the explanation given of the origin and primary development of life accounts quite naturally for the ubiquity of microbes and the consequent universal distribution of life all over the globe. Further the redistributions of energy involved in the transition of primeval microbes into primordial cells, and of these latter into the divergent types of unicellular plants and animals respectively, indicate how the evolution of life accords with the principle of universal evolution.¹ (e) And finally the spectacle of these primordial germs responding to their environment, and gradually unfolding into innumerable marvellous and varied forms of microscopic plant and animal life, must surely suggest most exalting ideas regarding the nature, method and rational purpose of the creative power.

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Evolution of higher forms of plant life.—Having thus established the origin of biotic evolution, and traced it through primordial cells and single cell plants and animals, we must now glance rapidly at its further course through the more complex many-celled forms of life. According to the dictionary the word "evolve" signifies "to bring forth in regular order", and for our present purpose there can be no better example of such progressive evolution than that described in Genesis 1. 12: "And the earth brought forth grass—herb yielding seed after its kind—and tree bearing fruit wherein is the seed thereof, after its kind." The creative Spirit had already reduced chaos to some sort of regular order, and the divine Reason, as indicated by our rational scientific survey, had worked out the conditions necessary for the origin and development of life on the earth, and had prepared the environment accordingly. The faintly luminous, intensely powerful nebular light that "divided light from the darkness" had first appeared, but had to tone down during the indefinitely long æonian "days" until, in fact, on the "3rd day" it so nearly approximated to the condition of our sun—formed on the "4th day"—that it was ready

¹ See formula, p. 21, last two lines,

to effect its life-creating work (p. 22-3). During those æonian days the earth, too, was being similarly prepared, for the heavy vapours "under the firmament" were condensed into the solid crust of the earth, while the lighter, mostly aqueous, vapours floating above were in their turn condensed, and completely submerged the solid earth, so that these again had to be separated by the "gathering together of the waters unto one place, letting the dry land appear". Thus was "vitality point" reached on the earth. Then the divine Word prevailed, bidding the process of biotic evolution begin, and continue as it is to this day; then was mother earth delivered of her first-born, the primordial germs, containing within them the seeds of all future forms of life which developed from them later, and then, with the birth of the original microbes, the earth might admissibly be said to have "put forth grass, herb yielding seed, and fruit tree bearing fruit", although these could only have been evolved subsequently when the nebular sun had contracted into "the greater light that rules the day"—into our own sun regulating our solar days of twenty-four hours each, controlling the seasons, and causing the growth of all green vegetation.

Note that the earth was expected to produce the plants automatically—"let the earth bring forth"—and in regular evolutionary sequence, simple grass-like forms, complex flowering herbs, and great trees; the geological record shows how this has been carried out in past ages, but if anyone wishes to see the divine command being obeyed at the present time let him cast an observant eye over some marshy tract of country, since this most nearly resembles primitive conditions. Here he can see the water not yet completely separated from the dry land, the stagnant pools being connected by soft slushy mud covered with green slime composed largely of single cell plants, often united in long grass-like threads floating on the adjacent water, while, where the ground is a little firmer, tufts of rank grass and reeds appear, and any rotten vegetation is covered with lowly mosses, lichens, and fungi. Usually a sluggish stream feeds the swamp with water from the neighbouring high ground, and on its willow-fringed banks most probably are representatives of "horse-tails" and ferns, gigantic specimens of which preponderated in the dank primeval jungles—while "herbs yielding seed" grow in ever-increasing numbers as "the dry land appears", until perhaps thick bushy scrub merges finally into forest "trees bearing fruit wherein is the seed thereof". And all these varied forms of plant life, from the microscopic particle of green slime on the mud swamp to the widespreading monarch of the forest, are composed entirely of the above described vegetable cells, each inheriting from microbic ancestors the powers of adaptability and reproduction that enable it to play its part in the plant system, whether it be as an independent single celled plant, or a sap-forming root cell, a woody supporting stem-cell, a green respiring leaf-cell, an attractively coloured flower-cell, or a reproductive

seed-cell. Such very briefly is the course of plant evolution, as it was in the beginning according to the biblical account, as it has been all through the ages according to the geological record, and as it continues at the present day according to modern scientific ideas.

Evolution of higher animals.—Similarly the spirit which “moved upon the face of the waters” uttered the creative word: “Let the water bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life” (Gen. 1. 21), followed by its natural sequel (v. 24), “Let the earth bring forth the living creature after its kind,” terminating in the creation of man with dominion over “the fish of the sea and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth” (v. 26). *Observe once more the regular automatic evolutionary sequence from low to high forms of life*, in this case on the animal scale, which must now be sketched out briefly.

Microscopical examination of a drop of stagnant marshy water shows that it does indeed contain “abundantly the moving creature that hath life”, illustrating the first stage of animal creation by a great variety of single cell forms. The next higher animals in the scale begin life each as a single cell, which, by growth and repeated subdivision, forms first a little ball of jelly, liquefying in the centre, thus becoming a small bladder, the skin of which consists of a single layer of cells; this in turn by being, as it were, pushed in at one point—just as one might do with a perforated hollow rubber ball—is converted into a double skinned cup or bag, the hollow interior of which forms the animal’s stomach; this stage represents the limit of development reached by such simple animals as sponges, sea-anemones, jelly-fish and all their kind. In all the higher animals, however, an intervening third layer of cells is developed from the two above mentioned, and from these three all parts of the body are formed: the outer layer is naturally that by which it comes into relation with the external world, in other words it is the animal’s skin with its appendages (hair, teeth, nails, feathers, etc.) and its nervous system; the inner layer forms the lining of the alimentary canal and all the organs (lungs, liver, etc.) opening into it, while the third intermediate layer gives rise to all the other tissues, such as muscles, bones, reproductive organs, etc. These various organs are found in their simplest form in the group of worm-like animals which take refuge underground, and are still comparatively simple in the next higher group, the shell-fish, which protect themselves by secreting a hard outer shell, inside which they live a very restricted existence; but they become more complicated in the representatives of the crab and lobster tribe which have succeeded in forming an outer skeleton that does not interfere with active locomotion, and they attain a truly astonishing degree of perfection in the very varied and highly endowed forms of insect life, which do not trust to their delicate shell for protection, but may be said to live by their wits.

All these groups are commonly classed together as "Invertebrata" because they have no back-bone or vertebral rod, but we now pass on to the highest groups of animals—the "Vertebrata"—all characterized by possessing a jointed spine, a feature so distinctive as to suggest that animals built on such a plan could not possibly have the same origin as the invertebrate type; it would appear as if the process of evolution that connects all the other classes of animals so naturally together has suddenly ceased to afford a consistent explanation of the origin of the most important groups. But when chemistry reveals a gap in a long sequence of chemical elements or compounds, it announces confidently that the deficient substance, possessing certain requisite properties, will sooner or later be discovered: similarly astronomy, by observing discrepancies in the movements of the planets, has been able to predict the existence, situation, and orbital track of other unknown planets, and these well-founded anticipations have been verified in due course, with the result that what seemed defects in science were made to afford the strongest proofs of its reliability; so too biology, which is quite as exact as any other science, has shown itself able to indicate correctly the existence and the character of missing links in the chain of biotic evolution, and the question of the Vertebrate origin is a case in point.

In studying the early stages in the formation of any animal possessed of bony structures, it is invariably found that these parts are at first composed entirely of a gristly substance—called 'cartilage'—the cells of which later on take up lime salts from the animal's food, and so become changed into bone. This suggests forcibly that the early primitive types of vertebrate animals, which evolution assures us undoubtedly existed, must have had only gristly or cartilaginous spines, and that as higher forms appeared and the enclosed nervous system became better developed and needed more efficient protection, lime salts were deposited in this cartilage, thus transforming it into the ordinary familiar back-bone, which was jointed in order to retain the advantage of flexibility. We cannot expect to find many examples of these primitive by-gone types at the present day, for naturally such simple forms would tend to die out in the struggle for existence, and be superseded by the better developed types to which they gave rise, but let us see what evidence of this kind exists. Attached to rocks and shells along the sea coast may be seen transparent pale brownish bag-like little masses of gristly matter, one to five or six inches long, known as 'sea-squirts' from their habit of ejecting jets of water when irritated: anything more unlike a vertebrate animal could scarcely be imagined, and yet its young tadpole-like form possesses several characters in common with fish, for it has a gristly or cartilaginous axis, a spinal cord expanding into a tiny brain, and gill-slits for breathing purposes; these structures are, of course, in a comparatively rudimentary condition,

and the adult reverts to the invertebrate type, nevertheless, they must be regarded as representing early and somewhat abortive efforts towards vertebrate construction. Included in the same class is another primitive creature, a sand-burrowing, worm-like animal, which is probably still nearer to the ancestral type, since both its young and adult forms have such close relations with the Invertebrates that it is only grudgingly admitted to be a vertebrate, even though it does possess a minute gristly spine and has gill slits like a fish. On the other hand there is still another member of this most interesting class, which although a headless, brainless, heartless, limbless specimen is yet described¹ as "a highly specialized animal differing in all probability very considerably from the early vertebrate ancestor"; it is a flattened lance-shaped fish-like animal, about one and a half inches long, and has advanced so far that it possesses an elaborate gill-breathing apparatus, and a quite well-developed gristly spine which persists all through its adult life.

This form prepares the way for the next more highly developed class including lampreys and hags—worm-like, limbless and scaleless creatures likewise possessing a gristly spine and pouch-like gills—and these again are followed by such cartilaginous fish as the sharks and rays, and those other types, represented nowadays by the sturgeon, which are covered with strong brightly polished enamelled plates. These armoured fish are represented in great variety and numbers amongst the earliest fossil remains and seem to indicate that nature was then seeking some suitable means of protecting the vital internal organs, but just as in the case of the invertebrate shell-fish, the more perfect this external defence became, the more it restricted the activities of the animal, and thus hindered its further evolution; consequently the energy, expended in elaborating the hampering external skeleton, was redistributed in efforts to develop the far more efficient internal bony skeleton, which, while equally well adapted for support, and for the protection of the vital nervous system, yet allowed the animal perfectly free play, and thus favoured the diversity of growth and structure that is such an essential feature in evolution. The acquisition of a bony skeleton, in fact, opened up great prospects to the evolving aquatic animals, and especially provided the means of withstanding the buffets and vicissitudes incidental to terrestrial life, consequently the next animals show transition forms between these two modes of life; the teeming aquatic life having "been fruitful and multiplied and filled the waters in the seas" (Gen. 1. 22) must now spread over the green earth duly prepared to receive it.

Included among the fish are found widely distributed forms which possess characters that enable them to live in slushy mud;

¹ *Treatise on Zoology*, edited by Sir Ray Lankester, Part IX, p. 1.

they are called "double breathers", because, whilst they retain the gills by which they breathe in water, they have developed an air-breathing lung out of the ordinary fish's swimming bladder; moreover in these curious creatures the paired fins have become modified into limbs, in some cases jointed, by means of which they move about on the slippery surface of the mud. This class forms a natural connecting link with the next higher group of amphibious frogs, which possess gills in their early aquatic life, but as they become air-breathing land animals later on, these structures cease to function and so disappear. Once animal life was firmly established on dry land the varying nature of the environment caused "the earth to bring forth the living creature after its kind" (Gen. i. 24), and these endless modifications in structure need not be followed out here further than to state in a general way that these land animals, reptiles, birds, and mammals progress along separate evolutionary lines of ever-increasing complexity, until the most highly developed members of each series are produced. Although these various types of terrestrial animals appear at first sight to be totally distinct from each other, yet *it could easily be shown by similarities in their internal structure, by the course of their development, and by the presence of numerous transition forms, that they are all in fact very closely and intimately related together as successive links in one common chain of evolution.*

Finally amongst this last class, the Mammalia, we arrive at Man, the highest of all animals, no doubt, but, biologically considered, merely the descendant of a sea-squirt, merely the latest product in evolution from a sand-burrowing worm. It is indeed a humiliating fact that man, who is but "little lower than the angels", has to begin at the lowest rung of the ladder of life, as a single microscopic cell which grows and multiplies until it forms first a jelly-like mass, then a hollow bladder which becomes a double-skinned cup, the cells of this arranging themselves into three layers portioned off so as to form all the various organs of the body. During this process the embryo develops a rod of gristle that subsequently turns into the backbone, shows well developed gill-slits, one of which persists throughout life,¹ and in fact passes through the various stages which were seen to be represented by permanent forms amongst the lower animals. Moreover, human embryos are so completely identical in all respects with those of the other higher animals that even expert "embryologists can often only distinguish the embryos of mammalia (including of course man), birds, lizards and snakes by differences in their

¹ This cleft remains as a tube which passes from the throat into the ear, and its existence is easily demonstrated by shutting the mouth, closing the nostrils, and breathing out forcibly, when the air from the lungs will be felt to pass up through this tube and inflate the ear, from which its exit is prevented by the thin layer of skin that forms the drum of the ear.

size.”¹ All this may be summed up in Huxley’s words: “there are valid reasons for the belief that all animals of higher organization than the Protozoa, agree in the general characters of the early stages of their individual evolution . . . so far as *individual plants and animals are concerned, therefore, evolution is not a speculation but a fact.*”²

If we examine the trunk of a tree which has been sawn across, it will be seen to show a series of concentric rings, each of which corresponds to a year’s growth, so that by counting the rings we can tell the age of the tree; in a similar way the earth’s crust is found to consist of a series of layers representing different eras of its existence, the superficial ones being of course, as in the case of the tree, the latest, whilst the deeper layers were formed in very ancient times. Imbedded in each of these strata are the petrified remains of animals which lived at these different periods, and research shows that fossils found in the deepest, and therefore earliest, strata are of the simplest types, and that those nearer the surface become more and more highly developed, until in the superficial layers the fossilized relics of animals with backbones appear. As anticipated by evolutionary considerations the earliest forms of these are marine fish, which are followed later by amphibia and giant reptiles of grotesque shape, many of these being winged creatures; later still appear mammoths and mammalian animals, e.g. elks, bears, etc., resembling more closely those of our own time, and amongst these are included man’s ape-like ancestors found in comparatively recent formations.

Even the above very incomplete account—of the intimate relationship between existing types of animals, of their common origin from very simple sources, of their progressive evolution into groups of higher forms, of the uniformity in their mode of individual development, and of the orderly sequence with which they appeared on the earth in prehistoric times—may give some idea of how accurately biological facts confirm the anticipated course of evolution, and how completely they justify the following statement: “The vast bulk of botanical and zoological work on living and extinct forms published during the last quarter of the nineteenth century increased almost beyond all expectation the evidence for the fact of evolution. The discovery of a single fossil creature in a geological stratum of a wrong period, the detection of a single anatomical or physiological fact irreconcilable with origin by descent with modification, would have been destructive of the theory. *But in the prodigious number of supporting discoveries that have been made no single negative factor has appeared,*

¹ Von Baer, quoted by Darwin in *Origin of Species*, Chap. XIV.

² Article “Evolution”, in *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 9th ed., vol. VIII, p. 747.

and the evolution from their predecessors of the forms of life existing now or at any other period must be taken as proved."¹

It only remains to represent here the various agencies involved in producing biotic evolution as merely particular expressions of the previously stated universal principle (p. 18) governing all creation. These "laws, taken in the largest sense", are enumerated by Darwin at the close of his great work,² as follows: "Growth with Reproduction; Inheritance which is almost implied by reproduction; Variability from the indirect and direct action of the conditions of life, and from use and disuse; a Ratio of Increase so high as to lead to a Struggle for life, and as a consequence to Natural Selection, entailing divergence of Character and the Extinction of less improved forms." All these processes may be regarded as reactions of the plastic living material to redispersions of energy, produced either as effects of varying external physical conditions, e.g. presence or absence of sunlight, heat, cold, dryness, moisture, etc., or through changes in quantity or quality of food supply, or through the organism's own disposition of its assimilated energy, involving different modes and habits of life, use or disuse of parts, and notably greater or less reproductive activity, with corresponding influence on the genetic factors in the reproductive elements. By this unceasing action of ever-changing energy on highly sensitive protoplasm, variations are produced, which, if beneficial, are stabilized, and perpetuated by appropriate regulation of reproductive energy, and through the continuous action of this entirely natural process the primitive germs of life have, in the course of ages, gradually evolved into all the varied forms of plants and animals which have appeared on the earth. Apparently the progress of biotic evolution was far more rapid and effective in the remote ages of the past, when the sun's vitalizing influence was much more potent, and the creative process ran riot in producing exuberant vegetation, and all sorts of grotesque and fantastic monsters both on land and in the sea, but even under present more equable conditions the operations of this life-modifying principle are very evident to observant eyes. In passing, it may be noted that here, too, as in the case of inanimate matter, the natural process of 'creation' can be imitated artificially, and astonishingly different forms of domesticated animals and cultivated plants be obtained thereby.

¹ Article "Evolution", in *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 10th ed.

² *Origin of Species*, 6th ed., vol. II, p. 305.

RATIONAL

"Since men's natural life is hidden in the spiritual mystery of reason, their right use of reason is full of marvels, and we know not at what moment it will make us initiate into a revelation which will carry human capacities beyond the bourns of time and space"

(Leading article "Reason and Arts", in *Times Literary Supplement*, June 9th, 1927)

From the scientific point of view there is nothing more supernatural in the formation of the solid earth from the gaseous matter that emanated from the sun than there is in the formation of a hailstone from the watery vapour of the atmosphere. Every instructed person knows quite well that the latter phenomenon is merely the inevitable result of the action of cold on water vapour, causing it to condense into spherical drops of water, which, by further loss of heat, become frozen, and then fall to the earth by gravity; none but children and simpletons would believe that hailstones are due to supernatural beings of some sort making little snowballs up in the air, and pelting the earth with them; it is equally childish to invoke the personal action of a supernatural being in order to explain the creation of the heavenly bodies and of our earth with its inhabitants, when, as has been shown above, the entire process can readily be accounted for by the inherent properties of matter under the influence of ordinary physical forces. And just as, knowing the properties of frozen water, we can predict that under ordinary circumstances the hailstone will melt and subsequently evaporate, so too, knowing the nature of the forces acting on the earth, we should in like manner be able to forecast its ultimate destiny under normal conditions. We have followed the constant unvarying track of these forces throughout the interminable ages of the past; we see them in actual operation all round us at the present day, and their methods of working, continuing always invariable, if observed correctly and interpreted aright, should enable us to reason out the result of their action throughout the boundless eternity of the future. Let us put this startling statement to the proof, in the first place as regards our own world, and then in the next section, as regards the entire universe.

By investigating the matter of which our earth is composed we find that while, under present circumstances, it is quite indestructible, yet it is really never stable in form or substance. Under the influence of energy derived from the sun, unceasing changes occur, alternatively constructive and disruptive, and the carefully adjusted balance of these changes results in continuous cycles, which form the interlocking cogwheels of nature's wondrous mechanism. A brief survey of facts, for the most part already adduced, will enable us to realize that these cycles prevail

everywhere in the material world around us—in isolated particles and in aggregate masses, in living material and in apparently inert substances, in terrestrial matter as a whole and in the various forces acting thereon.

Animate matter.—Not only does the life of every plant and animal represent such a cycle, but even the microscopic cells of which all forms of living material are composed have their own individual life-cycle to accomplish; all alike are born, are nourished, grow, reproduce themselves, die, and their decaying bodies furnish material for the growth of further life. These processes are all liable to be modified by varying conditions, both external and internal, and by such natural means, acting over vast periods of time, the plants and animals become divided into groups having special characteristic forms and life cycles, all these being intimately related to each other and to the general scheme or cycle embracing the whole range of life. The welfare and even the very existence of individual plants and animals depend on the condition of their component cells, and conversely the death of the plant or animal entails the extinction of the life-cycles of all its integral parts. Again, the condition of any individual member of a family of either plants or animals is likewise dependent on that of its parents, and so, through heredity, its life-cycle is most closely related to the cycles both of its ancestors and descendants. In order to realize the close inter-dependence of the life-cycles of the main groups, one has only to observe the intense struggle for existence going on everywhere in the natural world, or else to read Darwin's account¹ of what he calls "the infinitely complex relations between organic beings," illustrated by his well-known case of the red clover; this plant is fertilized only by humble bees, whose combs and nests are devastated by field mice, which in turn are destroyed by cats, so that the numbers of these last animals may "determine through the intervention first of mice and then of bees the frequency of certain flowers in that district". Darwin emphasizes the significance of such facts by saying that "unless the truth of the universal struggle for life be thoroughly engrained in the mind, the whole economy of nature with every fact on distribution, rarity, abundance, extinction, and variation, will be dimly seen or quite misunderstood". Finally as we have seen (p. 21) plant and animal life, each taken as a whole, form mutually complementary cycles, indispensable to each other's existence, and constitute together the whole complete cycle of life in the terrestrial vivarium.

Inanimate matter.—Similarly inanimate matter, whether unstable as water or durable as granite, is always and everywhere in a state of cyclic flux like that of the hailstone previously described. All the reactions taking place in a chemical laboratory

¹ *Origin of Species*, 6th ed., vol I, Chap. III.

are miniature cycles of changing matter, artificially broken down by physical forces into its constituent elements, which are then arranged in new forms that can be re-transformed as before. And the earth is simply a huge natural laboratory containing all kinds of matter, and provided with abundant supplies of energy, by the action of which the mineral soil is constantly being renewed and made available for plant and animal use. The solid rocks are broken up and pulverized by the weather and their dust is whirled by the wind into sheltered spots, or if carried away by streams and rivers is distributed as alluvial deposits, or swept far out into the ocean; after contributing its quota of salts, chalk, silicon, etc., to the formation of marine or terrestrial life it eventually becomes deposited, covered with other accumulations, is compressed, desiccated, and finally re-petrified, enclosing perhaps fossilized remains of plants or animals to tell the tale. Sea cliffs are worn away by the action of the waves, even vast mountain ranges are subject to similar age-long changes under the disruptive influence of internal fires, volcanic upheavals, erosion by glaciers, and incessant weathering. deposits of marine shells on many a mountain top indicate that "iron hills" and ocean bed are interchangeable, and the phenomena of earthquakes and the super-position of geological strata reveal clearly that the whole solid crust of the earth partakes of the general instability and perpetual re-arrangement. We know from the geological record that these terrestrial processes, acting incessantly throughout all ages, produced successive periods, each characterized by its own special configuration, its own particular climatic conditions, and as a consequence its own peculiar fauna and flora. And these immeasurable periods, each complete in itself yet inseparably united with the others, rolling on continuously like waves breaking on the sea beach, form part of a great tidal cycle destined to reach its high water-mark, and then ebb away once more in the remote epochs of the future.

Physical Forces.—So too the natural forces, which produce all these unceasing changes in living and dead matter, are themselves necessarily in a corresponding state of recurring variation, remaining apparently inert for longer or shorter periods and then displaying their activity, causing the matter with which they are associated to change its form, their own mode of expression being altered accordingly; this occurs typically in chemical reactions previously described (p. 18). But although these physical forces assume such apparently different forms as heat, chemical action, vitality, etc., yet these are all, directly or indirectly, expressions of energy emanating from the sun, consequently it is not surprising to find that they are readily inter-changeable. The sun-produced nourishment contained in plants, when digested and assimilated by animals, provides the energy necessary for their life-cycles, re-appearing thus as body-heat, or in the latent form as neuromuscular power, capable, as we have seen (p. 21), of transformation

into various other forms of physical force. Similarly the solar energy of by-gone ages produced primeval forests, which subsequently turned into seams of coal, thus providing the source of heat used, perhaps, to quicken dormant animal life in an incubator, to stimulate plant growth in a conservatory, or to generate electricity, the embodiment as it were of all the natural forces. In fact just as matter under present conditions remains indestructible though ever altering in form, so, too, solar energy is never really lost, though constantly changing from one mode of expression to another, on the principle long since enunciated by Joule¹ in the following words. "the great agents of nature are by the Creator's fiat indestructible, and whatever mechanical force is expended an exact equivalent of heat is always obtained." Yet all the cyclic processes we have been considering show by their rhythmic nature that energy is constantly being emitted and lost so far as concerns the matter engaged, whether this be the materials of a chemical reaction, of a living organism, of an active volcano, or of the entire earth itself; in the last case this means that the energy so radiated from the surface of the earth passes out into space, and is permanently lost to our world, consequently all terrestrial activity would soon cease, were it not that fresh supplies are being continually received from the sun. But when we reflect that the sun 90,000,000 miles away never ceases pouring a fierce tropical heat on our earth, which at that distance is a mere pin-point in space, receiving less than a two thousand millionth part of the solar radiation, we can well understand that this source of energy must be constantly diminishing in intensity, and though it has inconceivably prodigious stores in reserve, yet these must become exhausted sooner or later in the eternity of the future. Indeed, the previously stated considerations, regarding the origin and development of life on the earth, afford convincing evidence that the sun's energy has very appreciably and progressively diminished in the relatively recent past, its original powerful, life-destroying, nebular radiation having become gradually reduced to a life-creating stage—vitality point—then to a highly active life-developing condition, and so to its present state of mainly life-supporting activity. And this diminution must continue in the future as in the past: steadily, imperceptibly but inexorably, the earth's supply of solar energy must dwindle to a point—mortality point—where life can no longer be sustained thereby; the higher less resistant forms will first perish, then all the others in due sequence, leaving the most resistant microbes as sole survivors, and finally these too—the first and last representatives of life on this globe—will also succumb, thus completing the terrestrial cycle from the biological point of view. If the sun,

¹ In the postscript of a paper read to the British Association in 1843 under the title, "The calorific effects of magneto-electricity, and the mechanical equivalent of heat."

with its glowing heat and superabundant energy, speaks to us eloquently of our origin and present existence, the moon, with its cold and lifeless surface and extinct volcanoes, may well remind us of the natural fate of our world in the remote future.

UNIVERSAL

"Into the Universe and *why* not knowing,
Nor *whence* like water willy-nilly flowing:
And out of it, as wind along the waste,
I know not *whither*, willy-nilly blowing."

—RUBAIYAT of Omar Khayyam.

A little consideration should show that the evolutionary processes sketched above are by no means limited to our complete terrestrial cycle, nor do they terminate with the extinction of our sun's activity but are subsidiary to a vastly greater scheme embracing the entire universe. How vast and far-reaching they really are will only appear if we try first to define clearly what the universe actually comprises, and then develop the true significance of evolution by extending its application thereto.

The Universe.—The limits of our solar system or terrestrial universe, represented by the orbit of the outermost recently located planet Pluto, may be taken as comprised within a sphere having a diameter of over 7,000 million miles, but enormous as this distance is, yet it is far too short to serve as the unit of measurement of the universe. For this purpose we must use what astronomers call "the light year", by which they mean the distance light traverses in one year: the speed at which light travels can be accurately measured and is found to be 186,000 miles per second, which multiplied by the number of seconds in one year—roughly 31½ million—gives a mileage of about 6 billion representing a light year. This is the unit for celestial measurements, just as the mile is for distances on the earth, and applying it to the stars it is found that the nearest neighbour whose distance is known to us is about four light years away, so that when we view it through a telescope we see it, not as it is at that moment, but as it was four years previously. But there are other stars, tens, hundreds, thousands of light years distant, and considering these amazing distances and that probably about 200,000 million such suns have to be accommodated inside the great celestial sphere, it is not surprising that its diameter is estimated at about 220,000 light years. This may be regarded as our stellar universe extending to such remote distances that suns and solar systems larger than our own are quite invisible even through most powerful telescopes, and are only rendered apparent by prolonged exposure of very sensitive photographic plates.

Yet we can penetrate further even than this into the depths of space, for on these same photographic records are impressions

of nebular masses, presenting all the appearance^f of revolving fire mists in process of forming solar systems as previously described (p. 15). The largest of these nebulae, situated in the constellation Andromeda, is exceptional in being visible to the unaided eye, and its distance has been estimated at 900,000 light years: it presents an elliptical appearance, with a definitely spiral structure containing a circular nucleus, and is studded with condensation points representing nascent suns and solar systems.¹ The most distant nebulae differ from that in Andromeda by being devoid of structure, having no nucleus or condensation points, because owing to their almost fabulous distance we view them as they were before they showed signs of resolving into suns and stars. So vast are these nebulae that they may be regarded as universes like our own stellar universe: the distance assigned to the faintest of them is one hundred and forty million light years, and this may be taken to be the extreme limit of the nebular universe as revealed by present instruments; it is however quite certain that the limits of the universe extend far beyond this—even 600 times this distance—for, in fact, the remotest nebulae are known to be receding from us with varying velocities—of as much as 15,000 miles per second—suggesting the recent idea that the universe is rapidly expanding. One hundred and sixty years ago only one hundred and three isolated nebular spots were known, to-day about two million are discernible, covering a very considerable area of the heavens, and it is expected that instruments now under construction will increase the number perhaps eight times. It seems as if further improvements in optical apparatus must reveal more and more nebulae, until the depths of space appear covered with fire mist, and we shall then be actually looking at the primeval nebula already described: the scarcely perceptible shimmer of the remotest nebulae may represent the light just distinct from darkness, which first appeared in our universe—and beyond this we cannot see; no optical improvement, no perfection of photographic technique, can avail us further, for then we should be gazing spell-bound into the utter darkness and impenetrable abyss of the primeval void. Such is the truly majestic universe the evolutionary course of which must now be investigated.

Universal Evolution.—There are cogent reasons for believing that all the heavenly bodies have been derived from one common nebular source; their spectra show that they consist of like materials to those found in our solar system, they obey the same law of gravity, are subject to the same physical forces, assume the same shapes, revolve in the same direction, emit the same radiations, and are in short, from every point of view, strictly comparable with each other. Having regard then to this general uniformity amongst the myriads of stars, the course of evolution in any one, such as

¹ A very clear photograph of this nebula illustrates the article on "Nebulae" in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 11th ed.

our sun, should be typical of all, and further, since the earth is an actual fragment of our sun, its evolution should form a complete epitome of the universal process: just as a chemist judges the composition of a large uniform mass by analysis of a small sample, or as engineers and architects check elaborate schemes by noting the effects of miniature models, so too, we may ascertain the evolutionary course of the entire homogeneous universe by observing what takes place in the representative sample or model formed by our earth. How then do the main facts of terrestrial evolution apply to the universe generally? We have seen that, owing to its comparatively small size, the earth has cooled down from its original gaseous state much more quickly than our sun and the stars, and, by merely continuing this process, its present condition of external solid crust with still hot interior must inevitably pass into a further state of complete stabilization and inertia similar to that of the moon. Indeed so far as life on the earth is concerned this stage would exist at the present moment were it not for the energy borrowed from our sun, and the fact that our little earth, advancing thus more rapidly along the common evolutionary track, has already practically reached this stage, clearly indicates that our sun and all the starry host will eventually follow the same course.

This is in fact the only natural culmination of that uninterrupted process of diminishing energy and increasing stability of matter, which has been shown to prevail throughout the entire universe from the biblical "beginning", and previous considerations also assure us that this inevitable reduction of the universe to a state of inertia is very far from being the final stage in its evolution, which indeed has neither beginning nor ending. Examination of the matter and energy on our earth showed that even the solid rocks are not stable, that matter though constantly changing its form is indestructible under present conditions, and that energy is never really lost but only redisposed, consequently it is obvious that there is no such thing in nature as a state of permanent rest. The countless millions of glowing orbs in our stellar universe are burning away before our eyes at an extravagant rate, which may be gauged by the fact that our sun, though only a comparatively small star, is consuming four million tons of matter per second. What becomes of all the amazing amount of indestructible material thus transformed, and what of the prodigious stores of inextinguishable energy emitted during the process? A popular scientific writer¹ gives the answer to this question in the following statement, the concluding part of which will be referred to later: "The stars are wearing themselves away; where there is heat there is also radiation; the energy of matter is transferring itself to the Ether, which is the universal store-house of energy. Whether matter is ever," etc. To the scientific mind this answer may present no

¹ Sir Oliver Lodge, *Ether and Reality*, p. 157.

difficulty, but the following simple experiments may help to make it intelligible and acceptable to the uninstructed.,

If a small pinch of common salt be put into a glass full of distilled water it disappears, because the water has separated the salt particles so widely asunder that they are no longer visible as a solid substance, but are diffused uniformly throughout the liquid, every drop of which reveals their presence by a slightly saline taste. Pour this glassful into a large bucket full of fresh water, and the particles of salt again become diffused uniformly through this large volume of water and are lost to the sense of taste, but their presence could still be detected in every drop by means of delicate chemical tests. Finally pour this bucketful of water into a freshwater lake, and now the salt particles are so widely diffused that they cease to give any of the reactions of saline matter, the salt is temporarily, so to speak, annihilated, though its component particles still exist and would reappear if the lake could be concentrated down by evaporation. This may serve to give some idea of what happens to the spent matter and expended energy of the universe, that are constantly being transferred to the ether—the ultimate particles of matter are lost in the illimitable depths of space, while the energy is employed in maintaining this disruptive condition: in this way the universe is consuming its own smoke so thoroughly that no obvious trace of it can be detected in space where only the elusive ether exists. Now vary the above experiment by adding energy in the form of heat to the distilled water in the glass, and matter in the shape of salt until the water can dissolve no more: this saturated solution, as it is called, shows no change as long as it is kept hot, but if allowed to radiate off its heat the cooling liquid at once deposits the salt again in the form of solid crystals; this may help to illustrate the course of events during the further dissolution of the matter of the universe in the ether.

There is nothing to quench prematurely the fierce universal fires, they have no time limit since they have all eternity for the completion of their combustion, there is nothing at all to interfere with the uninterrupted continuation of the process until its inevitable consummation in the transference of all the remaining matter and energy of the universe into the ether of space. As Sir James Jeans puts it in the conclusion of the article previously quoted: "the primary physical process of the universe is the conversion of matter into radiation", and its ultimate achievement seems certain. What will happen then? The writer of the above interrupted quotation continues thus: "Whether matter is ever reconstituted from the ether we do not know; if it is, it will be remade in the depths of space, far away, and can then fall together again, and renew another and another frame of things for ever:" there appear to be most convincing reasons for accepting this as true. Matter, though annihilated as matter, transformed into

energy, and merged in the ether, has still to be accounted for, since energy is never, never, lost, and can never remain permanently at rest—it must continue to circulate. Just as the emission of heat caused the saturated saline solution to deposit its salt, so too the energy which caused and maintained the disruption of matter has only to be radiated off again for reconstitution of the matter to take place: this is in fact, according to our previous explanation, the very process by which every step in the entire scheme of "creation" has actually been effected.

Moreover the further suggestion regarding repeated renewals of the material framework by this process is, likewise, in full agreement with the course of terrestrial evolution as described. This revealed a regular sequence of balanced operations or cyclical changes pervading all earth's matter, animate or inanimate, and all its sun-derived energy in whatever form expressed; as stated so clearly by the writer of Ecclesiastes (Chap. 3. 1-15): "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven . . . a time to break down and a time to build up. That which is, hath been already, and that which is to be, hath already been; and God seeketh again that which is passed away." These actions and reactions are always equal and opposite, so that knowing one we can establish the other, or granted half of any cyclical process we can complete the whole; in accordance with this we find two stupendous cosmic processes that are mutually complementary. On the one hand we have traced out the progressive redistribution of the energy derived from primary radiation, resulting in the appearance of the existing material universe with its countless millions of blazing worlds, including our solar system and habitable earth, the whole energy and matter of which we know by actual observation to be subject to the influence of cyclic evolution; on the other hand we foresee that these innumerable heavenly bodies are inevitably destined to burn out and be annihilated, and that all the indestructible matter and inextinguishable energy liberated thereby are not lost but merely transformed in such a way that the whole evolutionary cycle can be repeated again and again.

This is very strongly confirmed by later scientific research, for Professor Millikan, the well-known authority on cosmic radiation, states¹: "there is excellent experimental proof" concerning the question of where atom-building processes take place in the universe: "combining this with the conclusion of Professor Eddington and Sir James Jeans, he arrives at the picture of a continuous atom-destroying process taking place under the extreme conditions existing in the interior of the stars, and an atom-creating process taking place between the stars in the equally extreme conditions of an opposite kind obtaining there." Further, as regards the associated problem "why the primordial positive

¹ *Physical Review*, October, 1928.

and negative electrons, which go to build up the common elements, have not been used up long ago " he and Dr. Cameron reply that : " out in the depths of space where we actually observe through the cosmic rays helium, oxygen, and silicon being continually formed out of positive and negative electrons, there too these positive and negative electrons are also being continually replenished through the conversion back into them, under the conditions of zero temperatures and densities existing there, of the radiation continually pouring out into space from the stars ".¹ Thus through this action of universal creation by the conversion of radiation into matter, and then the reaction of universal annihilation by the transformation of matter into radiation, there is established a vast and ever recurring cycle—the inconceivably grand, all embracing evolutionary procession of endless universes. (See diagram p. 17.)

" This is enough to know, the phantasms are ;
The Heavens, Earths, Worlds, and changes changing them,
A mighty whirling wheel of strife and stress
* Which none can stay or stem.

Only, while turns this wheel invisible,
No pause, no peace, no staying place can be ;
Who mounts may fall, who falls will mount ; the spokes
Go round unceasingly ! "

—SIR EDWIN ARNOLD'S *Light of Asia*, Book VIII.

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTE

It is now maintained ² that the second law of thermodynamics is fatal to the idea of a cyclic procession of endless universes depicted above, but surely it can scarcely be, that, amongst all the innumerable equilibrations previously described, there should be one single unbalanced process, cutting straight through all these cycles, making havoc of everything, and leading to complete ultimate perdition. That extinction awaits our little world in the remote future has indeed been shown to be certain, and that the same holds for all individual worlds and solar systems existing to-day can also be accepted, but that such is the final permanent fate of the entire scheme of things seems wholly incredible. Some form of counterpoise to the perpetual reduction of universal energy is required to maintain nature's harmonious system, some form of reconstruction is necessary to restore the exhausted forces of creation, and the existence of such a renovating process appears implied by the following consideration. Eternity does not consist merely of the boundless future, there is also an eternity of the past to which we are

¹ The above extracts are taken from a summary of Prof. Millikan's address in *Nature*, October 6th, 1928, p. 556.

² Jeans—*The Universe Around Us*, 2nd ed., p. 326.

heirs: if, then, the second law of thermodynamics has been in operation, unchecked, unopposed by any counteracting force during this measureless period, it seems as if it should long, long ago have achieved that exhaustion of the universal energy which it is still only threatening to bring about at some inconceivably remote period in the future.

On such general grounds and on all the evidence previously given, the following positive statement (*Ibid.*, p. 331) appears very questionable: "Many, giving rein to their fancy, have speculated that this low level heat-energy may in due course reform itself into new electrons and protons. As the existing universe dissolves away into radiation their imagination sees new heavens and a new earth coming into being out of the ashes of the old. But science can give no support to such fancies. Perhaps it is as well; it is hard to see what advantage could accrue from an eternal reiteration of the same theme, or even from endless variations of it." This last sentence appears to indicate lack of appreciation concerning the working of evolution. Jeans begins his book by a contrast between Galileo's telescope and modern instruments, but it was just by constantly repeating Galileo's model, with "endless variations of it", that the gigantic telescopes of to-day were evolved. Is it not by wearisome "reiteration of the same theme" that the novice becomes an expert in any game or occupation? Does no "advantage accrue" in the successive revolutions of the wheels of a locomotive?—Each revolution of the wheel brings the same point back again to the ground, no doubt, but meanwhile it has made progress along the road. And so with the countless cyclic processes in our natural world and with the endless cycle of the universes, each revolution may quite reasonably be regarded as a step in advance towards perfection. This we hold to be no mere "fancy" born of "imagination", but a most rational deduction from all the facts available, to which science in all its branches lends very strong support: even the mathematician, defeated by a recurring decimal, consoles himself that each repetition of the figures concerned reduces the margin of error till it finally becomes negligible. It is not of course intended to question the truth of the second law of thermodynamics, but merely to suggest that this is only one side of the equation, one half of a balanced cycle, which, if completely known, would confirm the truth uttered by "the great orator" (Eccles. i. 1, R.V. margin) of old: "I know that whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it" (Eccles. 3. 14). It may be that science may yet discover this "missing link", as indeed is claimed to have been done (p. 48), or more probably as Jeans himself admits (*Ibid.*, p. 338): "the ultimate realities of the universe are at present quite beyond the reach of science, and may be—and probably are—for ever beyond the comprehension of the human mind." To this every truly scientific mind might subscribe, more especially

in the form expressed by the early exponent of cyclic evolution just now quoted: "God hath made everything beautiful in its time: also he hath set eternity (R.V. margin) in their heart, yet so that man cannot find out the work that God hath done from the beginning even to the end" (Eccles. 3. 11).

EXALTING

"Thus from the war of nature, from famine and death, the most exalting object which we are capable of conceiving, namely the production of the higher animals, directly follows. There is grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been originally breathed by the Creator into a few forms or into one, and that, whilst this planet has gone cycling on according to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being, evolved"

—Concluding words of DARWIN'S *Origin of Species*.

The previous section will have totally missed its mark if it has failed to establish the truth that our puny short-lived earth plays an apparently entirely insignificant part, and human affairs seem to be an altogether negligible factor, in the unending cycle of the universes. This is no doubt at first sight a discouraging and depressing fact, but just as realization of ignorance is the first step towards knowledge, so too, recognition of the extreme pettiness of our world, and all that pertains to it, is an essential preparation for appreciation of our true relation to the universe. Surely it must be a dull and wholly earth-bound mind which is not elevated by the knowledge that our world's existence, far from being the main object of creation, is in reality a mere nothing, so completely is it eclipsed by the amazing whirl of innumerable universes, forming, waning, and re-forming in the depths of illimitable space throughout all eternity. "The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament sheweth his handiwork," is indeed most true of this awe-inspiring never-ending cycle of universes, produced by the perfectly natural process of an eternal, infinite, and all-pervading power, working incessantly along progressive evolutionary lines.

The quotation at the head of this section shows that a great genius, patient observer, and profound thinker was moved to a grander view of terrestrial life and its development by regarding them in the light of a very limited aspect of evolution. Seeing then that this principle conforms with all the main facts established by science, as well as with the kernel of truth contained in the legendary accounts of creation, and that it can be extended so as to supply a natural, reasonable, and mind-elevating explanation of the "Whence" and "Whither" of the entire universe, it may confidently be adopted as the only satisfactory foundation of T.R.U.E. religion. And not the foundation merely, for it must also be shown that evolution can likewise furnish conceptions both

of the Supreme Power and of man's relation thereto, in every way adapted to form a reliable framework for the universal exalting religion of an enlightened future; this was the object we started with (p. 13) and it is very beautifully expressed in the following description of Buddha's enlightenment with regard to universal evolution :

“ In the middle watch
Our Lord attained *Abhidya*—insight vast
..... Transported through the blue infinitudes,
Marking,—behind all modes, above all spheres,
Beyond the burning impulse of each orb,—
That fixed decree at silent work which wills
Evolve the dark to light, the dead to life,
To fulness void, to form the yet unformed,
Good unto better, better unto best,
By wordless edict; having none to bid,
None to forbid, for this is past all gods,
Immutable, unspeakable, supreme :
A Power which builds, unbuilds, and builds again,
Ruling all things accordant to the rule . . . ”¹

—SIR EDWIN ARNOLD'S *Light of Asia*, Book VI.

PART II

RATIONAL

False Religion

"I hate the rancour of their castes and creeds,
I let men worship as they will, I reap
No revenue from the field of unbelief
I cull from every faith and race the best
And bravest soul for counsellor and friend.
I loathe the very name of infidel.
I stagger at the Koran and the sword.
I shudder at the Christian and the stake;
Yet, "Alla", says their sacred book, "is Love"¹
And when the Goan padre quoting him,
Issa Ben Mariam,² his own prophet, cried
'Love one another, little ones' and 'bless'
Whom? even 'your persecutors'! there methought
The cloud was rifted by a purer gleam
Than glances from the sun of our Islam"

—TENNYSON, "Akbar's Dream."

¹ 1 John 4. 8, 16.

"Jesus, son of Mary."

CHAPTER II

INTRODUCTORY—REASON VERSUS FAITH

"Woe also to Reason if ever it should stifle religion! Our planet, believe me, is employed in some profound work. Do not pronounce rashly of the uselessness of one or other of its parts; do not say that this or that mechanism should be eliminated as it appears only to hinder the free play of the others. Nature, which has endowed the brute with an infallible instinct, has not conferred on man a misleading faculty. From his very structure you can confidently infer his destiny. 'God is in us.' Religion are false when they try to prove the infinite, to define it, to incarnate it if I may dare to say so, but are true when they affirm it. The gravest error with which they mingle this affirmation are as nothing to the priceless truth that they proclaim. The uttermost simpleton, provided he follows the dictates of his heart, is more enlightened concerning the reality of things than the materialist who trusts to explain everything by chance and the finite."

—Extract from the Preface to RENAN's *Life of Jesus*.

THE famous French writer quoted above utters the warning that reason must not stifle religion, but surely it is more correct to say that what passes for religion tries deliberately to stifle reason. Most religious sects stoutly maintain that in religious matters faith supersedes reason, and indeed their attitude seems to be that the more unreasonable and unlikely the matter in question, the greater is the faith required to accept it, and the more the merit attaching thereto; thus these "faiths", as they are rightly called, become entangled in "the gravest errors", and the leaven of this falsehood completely vitiates their affirmation of truth. On the other hand scientific observers, who spend their lives in eliciting truth, accept in the first place only actual matters of fact—proved so by reliable observation, by common sense, and experiment—then cautiously make rational deductions from such recognized data, and finally subject their inferences in turn to the most rigid tests available. By this right use of reason they make great discoveries, they cause truth to beget and confirm truth, they pass from the known to the hitherto unknown. As the difference between reason and faith is so fundamental we must apply our fourfold test with a view to determine which is our TRUE guide in religious difficulties.

TRUE

Consider the real attitude towards reason and faith adopted by the founders of the three great prevailing creeds, Buddhism

Christianity, and Mohammedanism. They all repudiated without hesitation the much-cherished faiths current in their day: they all meditated for long periods in solitude, *reasoning out matters for themselves*, and so arrived at the same truth (p. 212) by a quite natural process open to all rational beings, particularly in these far more enlightened times when knowledge and education, the handmaids of reason, are so generally available; they all delivered the main results of their meditation in messages that required no faith in endless supernatural events and incomprehensible theological mysteries, but made their appeal to plain reasonable common sense. Nowadays however the simple convincing truths reasoned out by these seers of old, have, through the perversity of their exponents, come to be regarded as conflicting supernatural revelations, accorded to divine or semi-divine beings, endowed with amazing miraculous powers, attributed to them by innumerable superstitious legends. For example any intelligent European familiar with Buddhism and the Far East would endorse the following account: "Tibet to-day is a Buddhistic country, yet Gautama, could he return to earth, might go from end to end of Tibet seeking his own teaching in vain. He would find that most ancient type of human ruler, a god king, enthroned, the Dalai Lama, the 'living Buddha'. At Lhasa he would find a huge temple filled with priests, abbots, and lamas—he whose only buildings were huts and who made no priests—and above a high altar he would behold a huge golden idol, which he would learn was called 'Gautama Buddha'! He would hear services intoned before this divinity, and certain precepts, which would be dimly familiar to him, murmured as responses. Bells, incense, prostrations, would play their part in these amazing proceedings. At one point in the service a bell would be rung and a mirror lifted up, while the whole congregation in an access of reverence, bowed lower . . . And this he would realize at last was what the world had made of his religion! Beneath this gaudy glitter was buried the Aryan Way to serenity of soul."¹ Let not the pharisaic Christian ignore "the beam in his own eye" as he reads this description of corrupt Buddhism! Let him substitute Christendom for Tibet, Christ for Gautama, the crucifix for the golden idol, etc., and the whole quotation applies almost word for word to ritualistic Christianity, except that the final sentence should read "Beneath this gaudy glitter is buried the way to the kingdom of the one and only God, the heavenly Father, the universal spirit".

The truth is that the modern faiths, having degenerated into gross superstition and idolatry, are outrages against reason, and can therefore only be received by faith, which is consequently extolled by all ecclesiastical agents as amongst the greatest of virtues: in reality however when it thus accepts what is opposed

¹ See Huc's *Travels in Tartary, Thibet, and China*, cited by H. G. Wells, *Outline of History*, p. 215.

to the unsophisticated doctrines of the world's greatest religious teachers, to universal experience, to unvarying natural phenomena, to all the facts of science, to common sense, and to everything that is rational, then faith is false, misleading and degrading; so degrading in fact that formerly in Christian and Mohammedan countries even fire and sword, Inquisition tortures, and confiscation of life and property were resorted to in order to compel acceptance of their incredible superstition, debasing doctrines, and idolatrous worship. And still at the present day it is only by perverting the minds of children and ignorant weaklings, by fostering fears of death, by false promises of temporal and spiritual rewards, by equally false threats of eternal punishments, in short by the most insidious ecclesiastical coercion of all kinds that a very reluctant and half-hearted profession of belief in these gross superstitions is extorted from "the faithful". But "great is truth and it prevails", consequently reason, rightly used to reveal pure truth, must triumph over faith which merely accepts truth and falsehood alike.

RATIONAL

Reason if rightly used is not misleading but is our recognized reliable guide in all the ordinary affairs of life, where faith would be utterly useless, as could be shown by innumerable examples. For instance the advocates of faith-healing maintain that this is superior to human knowledge and skill in the matter of curing the manifold "ills that flesh is heir to", but the fact that these miracle workers do not attempt to deal with the vast multitudes of sufferers who are cured or relieved daily in the innumerable hospitals throughout the world shows clearly how impotent is faith as a practical method of treating serious diseases and injuries. This is confirmed particularly by all cases amenable to surgical treatment, a most convincing example being the common eye disease known as "cataract". The eye is a minute camera with a clear lens occupying the central dark spot or pupil, and this lens often becomes opaque, in old age, thus forming the 'cataract' which turns the pupil white, prevents light entering, and so causes blindness in that eye. Can faith clear this obstruction and thus restore the lost sight? The answer is a most emphatic "*Never*". But reasoning from the known facts, the surgeon makes a necessary incision in the eyeball, extracts the pea-like obstruction, and, when the wound has healed, substitutes a suitable spectacle lens; in this way vision is restored to thousands of sightless eyes, proving that reason based on knowledge is man's true guide in everyday life, while superstitious faith is utterly futile. As another example of this—physical research provided reason with the facts from which it developed wireless telegraphy, the result being that formerly the occupants of a solitary ship foundering in mid-ocean

put their faith in Providence and prepared for a watery grave, whereas nowadays they simply establish wireless communication with the nearest steamers, and prepare to tranship. Place any sensible man in charge of such a ship and give him the choice of either sending the most fervent prayers and hymns to heaven for deliverance, or on the other hand sending out S O S signals from an efficient wireless installation—on which of the two messages is even the most piously disposed individual likely to rely? The honest answer to this question proves clearly that in the last resort man relies on his reason in preference to faith, and should consequently base his religion also thereon; it is not rational for the Supreme Power to endow man with his reliable guide in the form of reason, and then commend and reward him for trusting instead to faith in prayers, religious sorcery, or miracles.

UNIVERSAL

Reason is not only universal in the sense that it is the light which lighteth every normal human being born into the world, by which alone we can "prove all things", distinguish the true from the false, and regulate every action of our lives accordingly, but also the truth which reason elicits is likewise universally applicable and acceptable to all rational beings everywhere. Innumerable illustrations of this might be drawn from every branch of science; consider how correct reasoning from astronomical data enables the mariner to navigate the trackless ocean with unerring accuracy, how deductions from physics have revolutionized the world's transport and communications, how the facts of chemistry are applied to every day household economy, how botanical knowledge is employed to increase and benefit the national food supplies in all countries, and how the practical application of biological observations alleviates human suffering by preventing, relieving, or curing disease, and by rendering modern surgery so wonderfully efficient. In all these cases rational carefully tested deductions from accurate observations give results, which, after making due allowance for human errors and limitations, are (t) invariably reliable, (r) always conform to the established order of nature, (u) are uniform no matter where or how often applied, (e) and elevate mankind by bestowing confidence in the divine power of human reason. Seeing then that reason, rightly used, produces such TRUE consistent results—which faith is utterly unable to achieve—surely it deserves to become the dominant universal governing principle in all human affairs, and certainly cannot be dispensed with in the all-important matter of religion.

EXALTING

That reason is the most exalting factor influencing human life is obvious from all the above considerations,—as we shall see later (p. 233), it is literally “God within us”: without it, or by its perverse use, we become imbeciles on a level with the brutes; with it, rightly used, we are as gods, “knowing good and evil”, searching all things in heaven and earth, exposing the hidden mysteries of nature, and not merely affirming, but investigating and revealing, the infinite. On the other hand there is nothing elevating in unreasoning faith; it is not a reliable guide even in the most ordinary affairs of life; it scarcely pretends to reveal truth of any kind, and it cannot even distinguish the true from the false as shown by the fate of the extinct faiths of the past, as well as by the numerous contradictory creeds, all so pathetically accepted as true by their faithful followers at the present day. But exalting reason is able to sift this impure material, extracting whatever is founded on recognized facts, and so can replace undiscerning faith by actual knowledge of truth.

Let us then finally dismiss from our minds the bogey that employment of our divine reasoning powers may result in stifling religion, and let us on the contrary boldly apply them to freeing the world for ever from its false faiths, from all the debasing ecclesiastical practices that have to be employed in order to propagate them, and from their evil fruits of perpetual strife and discord which form the decisive proof of their falsehood. Employed in this way reason can indeed stifle whatever is false in the current faiths, but by this very means it infuses the breath of life into TRUE religion.

CHAPTER III

TRUE

*The truth extracted from obsolete religious systems.
Various false Christian ideas concerning God.*

IF a dictionary¹ be consulted the word "religion" will be found defined somewhat as follows: "Belief in a superhuman being or beings, especially a personal God controlling the universe and entitled to worship and obedience—the feelings, effects on conduct, and the practices resulting from such belief: a system of faith, doctrine, and worship." This combination of creed, moral code, and ceremonial worship was originated and developed by primitive man in the earliest periods, and has ever since haunted and oppressed the minds of suffering humanity. The fact that this three-fold system has endured throughout the ages, in spite of all the wars and bloodshed, tortures and persecutions, ecclesiastical bigotry, tyranny, sorcery, superstition and other evils inherent in it, would seem to indicate that religion in this form contains something true, something that man craves, something that he feels is essential to his welfare and peace of mind. But though these superstitious creeds, codes, and ceremonies may continue to satisfy those whose conservative minds have been irretrievably perverted by ecclesiastical training in early childhood, they are totally inadequate to supply the spiritual needs of the better educated, the more progressive, more intellectual, and particularly the more scientific minds of to-day, unless they be treated in some such way as follows. These crude concepts of religion must be thoroughly purified by the fires of scientific Truth; the light of Reason must dispel their false legends, myths, miracles and superstition generally; the truth they undoubtedly contain must be extracted and presented in a form suitable for Universal acceptance as a practical guide to human conduct, if they are ever to be moulded and Exalted into one TRUE soul-satisfying, world-purifying, God-honouring religion, worthy to supersede all existing faiths, and to endure unchallenged as long as the world lasts.

Ask any earnest believer to-day what has become of all the innumerable religious creeds of past ages, and in all probability he will complacently reply to this effect, "they were weighed in the balance and found wanting—they died out because they were

¹ Cassell's.

false", and the same answer would have been given under similar circumstances any time during thousands of years past. Now many of the nations professing these extinct creeds were every whit as strongly convinced of their truth as are the most bigoted followers of any present-day faith, whom in fact they far surpassed in religious zeal and fervour indeed so profoundly religious were, for example, the ancient Egyptians that the after-life was to them considerably more real than the present, causing the historian Herodotus to remark that "they looked upon their tombs as their proper dwelling place". Surely it is wholly incredible that a just and righteous God should have allowed mighty, cultured, and highly religious, nations to arise one after another, flourish for many generations and finally fall into decay, without ever a hint that their ideas of the godhead and its requirements, their worship and sacrifices, their intense religious enthusiasm, childlike faith, and earnest efforts to qualify for a future life, were all false, useless, or misdirected, and that the only true God and appointed method of soul salvation would not be revealed until thousands of years later. If this were so, then we might well debate whether the God who had acted thus towards ancient worshippers may not be treating modern believers in the same way, and whether consequently he is a God in any way "entitled to our worship and obedience". The authentic records of secular history, however, give no support to any such extremely unlikely and capricious revelation of God, at one comparatively recent time, to one "chosen people", or to one favoured individual, leaving the rest of the world sunk in ignorance and superstition throughout the ages. On the contrary history shows clearly that present-day religious systems are the outcome of an entirely natural and continuous process of evolution, starting from rude beginnings in the Stone Age period and progressing step by step with the onward march of civilization, constantly checked and frequently set back by superstitious fears, perverse ignorance, and narrow-minded prejudices, but ever and anon stimulated, quickened and exalted by the noble lives and enlightened precepts of far seeing philosophers who have appeared from time to time in different ages, and in many different countries. At no period in the world's history was the religious idea wholly false, and the following cursory retrospect may perhaps suffice to reveal the essential element of truth, present throughout even the most depraved and barbaric systems, in this age-long sequence of bygone creeds: disclosure of this essential element of truth will provide a solution of many vexed questions engendered by past and present religious errors and thus prepare the way for the TRUE religion of the future. With this end in view these extinct faiths may now be considered in regard to their three component parts, ceremonial worship, moral code, and theological creed.

ANCIENT CEREMONIAL WORSHIP

It certainly was not through defective ritual or lack of ceremonial observances that these early religious systems failed, for the modern ritualist has borrowed from pagan sources the whole of his elaborate forms of worship in every minute detail. The early missionaries to Thibet and other remote parts of Asia were greatly perplexed at this identity in methods of worship practised by the Buddhists and themselves, as shown by the following quotation :¹ "The cross, the mitre, the dalmatica, the cope which the Grand Lamas wear on their journeys, or when they are performing some ceremony out of the temple ; the service with double choirs, the psalmody, the exorcisms, the censer suspended from five chains which you can open or close at pleasure, the benedictions given by the Lamas by extending the right hand over the heads of the faithful ; the chaplet, ecclesiastical celibacy, spiritual retirement, the worship of the saints, the fasts, the processions, the litanies, the holy water—all these are analogies between the Buddhists and ourselves." Assuredly it was not from the lofty-minded masters whose names they invoked, that these Buddhist and Christian priests obtained sanction for such ecclesiastical charlatanry : both alike, unknown to themselves and each other, had simply adopted idolatrous practices that had been invented by primitive man, as indicated by his burial rites and offerings, and had been elaborated to a fantastic extent by the earliest nations of whom we have authentic records, notably the Assyrians and Egyptians, thousands of years before the present-day faiths were founded. The real fact is, as Jesus impressed on the Pharisees, ritualism is usually the outward and visible sign of the absence of inward spiritual grace, consequently it will be found to play no part in the TRUE religion of the future. But it undoubtedly does form the most conspicuous part of all past and present religious systems, and so it is important to point out here that, judging the matter from the standpoint of modern worshippers, if their prayers and ceremonies, sacraments and offerings, etc., afford solace to themselves, form an essential part of their religion, and be considered truly acceptable to God, then they owe all this entirely to their heathen predecessors who originated these practices, and with whom, therefore, they at least can find no fault in this particular matter of ceremonial worship.

ANCIENT MORAL CODES

Neither can the decay of these old faiths be attributed to low standards of morality, for in this respect also the modern world is indebted to paganism for every moral precept of any practical

¹ From Huc's *Travels in Tartary, Thibet and China*, cited by H. G. Wells in *Outlines of History*, p. 211.

importance. Just as our own legal code is based on ancient Roman law, altered and adapted to suit our requirements, so the codes of old times were simply progressive improvements on their predecessors, embodying variations suggested by the verdict of experience. This holds good no matter how far back we probe the world's history, and is most interestingly illustrated by "the oldest known legal code in existence" drawn up by Khammurabi, king of Babylon, about the year 2300 B.C.—"antedating the Mosaic code by at least a thousand years". It is contained in an inscription on a block of black diorite nearly eight feet high, discovered by French explorers at Susa, in 1901, and is now preserved in the Louvre at Paris. Its decipherment proved incontestably that the Mosaic code—which is stated in the Bible, and so is popularly believed to have been revealed to Moses by the God of Israel in the thunders and lightnings of Mt. Sinai—was merely such a compilation from pre-existing sources. Thus, following the impressive but wholly imaginary scene of the delivery of the ten commandments to Moses described in Exodus is the statement (Chap. 20. 21, etc.), "And the people stood afar off and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was. And the Lord said unto Moses, 'Thou shalt say unto the children of Israel, Ye yourselves have seen that I have talked with you from heaven . . . Now these are the judgments which thou shalt set before them'" (Chap. 21. 1). *And the judgments which follow are in many instances reproductions clause for clause from Khammurabi's masterpiece*, as shown by comparing the following quotations with their corresponding verses in Exodus, chapter 21. Clause 195: "If a son has struck his father one shall cut off his hands" (v. 15). Clauses 196 and 197: "If one destroys the eye (or limb) of a free born man, his eye (or limb) one shall destroy" (v. 24). Clauses 250, 251, and 252: "If a furious ox in his charge gores a man and kills him, that case cannot be brought to judgment. If an ox has pushed a man (with his horns) and in pushing showed him his vice, and if he has not blunted his horns, has not shut up his ox, if that ox gores a free born man and kills him he shall pay one-half a mina of silver. If it is the slave of a man he shall give one-third of a mina of silver" (vs. 28, 29, 32).¹

Not only did the Mosaic compilers plagiarize this inscription but they also imitated the Babylonian king's pious deception, for in his elaborate dedication on the monument, Khammurabi claimed that these laws were given to him by *his* god. A fragment of the introduction may be quoted to show its lofty tone which "reminds one of the majesty of portions of the Psalms": it begins thus: "When Anu the supreme . . . and Bel lord of heaven and earth who determines the fate of the universe, to Marduk the eldest

¹ A translation of this interesting inscription is given in the *Historian's History of the World*, vol. I., p. 498 *et seq.*, from which the above extracts are taken.

son of Ea, god of right, earthly power had assigned . . . then did Anu and Bel call me by name Khammurabi, the great prince, who fears god, to establish justice in the land, to destroy the wicked and base, so that the strong oppress not the weak, to go forth like Shamash (the sun) over the black heads (i.e. men), to give light to the world, to promote the prosperity of the people ;” and the inscription ends as follows, “ the oppressed man shall say ‘ Khammurabi is a lord who is like a father to his subjects, he has made the word of Marduk to be feared ’ . . . Khammurabi, the king of righteousness, to whom Shamash gave the law, I AM ”.¹ If the Hebrew scriptures adopted by Christians be regarded as infallible and divinely inspired, in spite of such facts as the above, then must not the same be claimed for the pagan sources from which they are derived ?

Such is the lesson to be learnt from the oldest code of laws extant, and strangely enough very similar deductions may be drawn from what is “ sometimes called the oldest book in the world ”, written in Egypt about the same time as Khammurabi’s inscription, and now in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. Known as the Prisse Papyrus it is believed to be a copy of an original written about 1,000 years earlier in the time of Tat-ka-Ra (Assa) by one Ptah-Hotep, spoken of in the book itself as “ Son of the King, of his body ”, and as Brugsch says : “ It does the heart good and rejoices the mind, to follow that old harangue, which preserves the intimate thought of the age of the prince, embracing the whole course of human existence in simple childish words. Here is a noble lesson on the true greatness of man, for throughout he breathes a spirit of human purity which finds the only true greatness in a modest mind.” Moreover this ancient record “ shows that at a time which probably preceded the building of the pyramids, namely as early as the 2nd Dynasty, the Egyptians regarded the civilization of their day as already past its prime. Men of that time were already tiring of the degenerate epoch in which they lived, and looking back to the good old days when, as it seemed to them, the Egyptians were a great people. As Dr. Taylor has remarked, it was a curious irony of fate that should have preserved to us such thoughts as these in the oldest written document which has been spared for our inspection . . . Professor Mahaffy too pointed out in this connection that not merely in practical civilization, but *in the appreciation of all the moral bearings of an advanced life, the Egyptian of two, three, or perhaps five thousand years before the Christian era was on a plane differing in no essential from the plane of modern Christendom ; and this thought is the one that should perhaps be the*

¹ Is it too fanciful a suggestion to make that possibly the Jews adapted their special name of Jehovah (‘ I am ’) from the last two words of this heathen inscription ? Considering it impious even to mention the name of the Supreme God, or knowing none worthy to call him, they may have left the name space blank and referred to him as, “ — I am ”, and so these words became used as in Exod. 3. 14, “ And God said, ‘ I am that I am ’ and he said . . . ‘ I am ’ hath sent me unto you .”

most prominently borne in mind by any one who will gain the truest lesson from the study of the sweep of universal history".¹ A striking example of this may be given; every Christian is taught that Jesus Christ originated the doctrine of brotherly love, and declared that this would be the sole test of man's conduct in the final judgment, which he thus described: "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; For I was an hungred and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger and ye took me in; Naked and ye clothed me; I was sick and ye visited me; I was in prison and ye came unto me" (Matt. 25. 34 and fol.). Now in the "Book of the dead", which was the Bible of ancient Egypt, we find another description of the last judgment as it appeared to the "heathen" in those remote ages: the human soul is there depicted arraigned before the supreme judge Osiris and the celestial jurors, pleading its cause in a prayer from which the following is extracted. "I have told no lies; committed no frauds; been good to widows; not over-tasked servants; not lazy nor negligent; been kind to slaves; promoted no strife; caused no one to weep; committed no murder; have sown joy and not sorrow; *have given food to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, and clothed the naked*—I am pure—I am pure." Obviously then the founders of modern religious systems have exercised a quite subordinate rôle as regards the institution of moral precepts; they inculcated "no new commandment but that which we had from the beginning" (2 John, v. 5).

ANCIENT THEOLOGICAL CREEDS

If then the ancient systems of religion failed to survive owing to some inherent defect, and no radical fault can be detected either in their ceremonial worship or in their standards of morality, clearly the only possible conclusion is that their gods, one and all, proved false in some way, and it is highly important for our purpose to discover this defect, so that we may eliminate it if present in existing ideas of God, and thus perhaps unite these into the one universal creed so much needed in this world of perpetual religious strife.

Who then were these ancient deities pronounced false by the verdict of history, and wherein did their falsehood consist? Woden and Thor, Zeus and Jupiter, Osiris and Isis and Horus, Bel and Anu and Ea, and hosts of others belonging to all the kindreds, tribes and nations of the world throughout past ages—truly an amazing company of immortals! Many of them all-powerful in their day, worshipped by the greatest of earth's monarchs, and recipients of homage from vast empires; inspirers of valiant deeds by many an ancient hero, commemorated in noble verse or song by similarly

¹ *Historian's History of the World*, vol. I, pp. 101 and 265.

inspired bards; gods in whose names conquered races were massacred wholesale, and to whom elaborate temples were dedicated and costliest sacrifices offered. It seems gross impiety for mere mortals of common clay to arraign these godlike beings on a charge of falsehood—yet all alike have passed away and are now as impotent as the meanest of those who put their faith in them. (t) They passed because they were merely mythical beings whose origin was shrouded in mystery, figured by man after his own bodily image, represented as living and behaving like human beings, endowed with human attributes and passions, and consequently quite unworthy of divine honours. (r) They passed because they had no fixed purpose or rational relation to the universe in general, and man's affairs in particular, and as soon as this was realized by their more intelligent adherents their cult naturally waned and died out. (u) They passed because they were purely local gods, whose sphere of influence was determined by geographical, historical, and racial conditions, so that when the nations which adopted them were vanquished or fell into decline the remnant of the people lost faith in them, their worship was abolished, and their temples and altars were deserted. (e) They passed because they formed the centres of debasing systems of rewards and punishments and of sacrificial bribery dishonouring alike to gods and worshippers, consequently when the burden of these offerings became intolerable, when experience showed that the gods or their agents were powerless to earn their bribes, or when more enlightened secular influences exposed how foolish and degrading such superstitious observances were, these gods became utterly discredited, as they deserved to be—in short they passed because they were not TRUE.

Notwithstanding all this these ancient deities would never have been invoked, would not have been universally adopted by every branch of the human race, and would not have continued to appear in a succession of different forms throughout all past ages, if they had not represented some essential element of truth that must have been present from the very beginning. Primitive man, like the raw savage of the present day, was awe-struck in the presence of the processes of nature, and failed to understand the working of the invisible force underlying them. His crude observations of nature revealed to him the precious germ of truth that a mysterious power existed, but most unfortunately for him and his posterity, superstition led him astray in dealing with it. Not recognizing that the strange phenomena which puzzled him were all due to natural causes explicable by reason, he regarded them instead as supernatural, and only to be explained through the working of superhuman beings, who must be propitiated and worshipped by flattery and offerings. This most deplorable error plunged the whole human race into the slough of religious falsehood and oppression, from which it has never yet emerged, for still religious bigotry, intolerance and the grossest superstition prevail everywhere throughout what would

otherwise be an enlightened world. The lesson therefore taught by the religious experience of all past ages is simply this, that even primeval man dimly recognized the existence of a mighty unseen power present in all the phenomena of the natural world, and that this fundamental truth has survived ever since, although innumerable mythical personal deities, to whom this power was ignorantly attributed, have all alike proved to be false gods, whose authority and influence have completely vanished, and whose worship, devoutly and trustingly rendered, only brought misery and woes unnumbered into the world. From this we conclude in *simpler authoritative words* that "God is Spirit" (John 4. 24, R.V. margin), and consequently personal gods are always false gods.

When we apply this rule to the three great religious systems in vogue to-day, Buddhism, Christianity, and Mohammedanism, we find that the first, the oldest and most widely accepted of these creeds, does not recognize the existence of any personal God, nor do any of the kindred occult creeds which dominate the entire far East. These creeds have all sprung from the teachings of the most profoundly thoughtful sages and most fervently earnest religious devotees the world has ever produced, whose ideas are embodied in a series of ancient records called Vedas, the oldest seeming to date from about 1500 B.C.; "there are four Vedas (Rigveda, Sama-veda, Yajurveda, and Atharveda) . . . their primary doctrine is the Unity of God. 'There is in truth', say repeated texts, 'but one Deity, the Supreme Spirit, the Lord of the Universe, whose work is the universe'."¹ These four Vedas, together with the Upanishads, the Sutras, and the Baghavadgita, reveal the progressive evolution of Hindu worship and theology, from the grossly idolatrous worship of innumerable supernatural beings to the *sublimest form of religious devotion, which consists simply in realizing the identity of the true inner self with the Universal Spirit*; every phase of this evolution is exemplified amongst Orientals at the present time, but still it holds good that "the impersonal Brahma, the world spirit, the one and only reality, remains to this day the ultimate element of the religious belief of intelligent India of whatever sect".²

The remaining two chief religious systems are both derived from Jewish sources, and alike claim to inculcate belief in one supreme personal God, though under different names; as Mohammedanism supplies no more reliable information about this God than is contained in the Christian scriptures, it may for our present purpose be altogether ignored, while our attention must now be concentrated on proving that the Christian ideas of God form no exception to the above rule that personal gods are always false.

Examining then the Christianity which dominates the western

¹Historian's History of the World, vol. II, p. 529.

²Encyclopædia Britannica, 11th ed., vol. IV., p. 379.

world, a great difficulty presents itself in the outstanding fact that it contains at least three different conceptions of this personal God, viz. (1) The Hebrew god Jehovah of the Old Testament scripture, (2) the man god Jesus Christ in the New Testament, and, (3) a mysterious combination of these two with a third element forming what is called a 'trinity in unity'. The divergence of opinion regarding these is well illustrated by the results of a questionnaire concerning religious beliefs, published by a prominent daily newspaper.¹ Out of 14,043 readers who returned answers 10,546 professed themselves Christians, 9,991 acknowledged belief in a personal God, only 9,549 regarded Jesus Christ as superhumanly divine, and only 7,484 admitted belief in that orthodox expression of the trinitarian doctrine, the Apostles' creed: it would appear therefore that amongst these 10,546 representatives of Christianity approximately 550 recognized no personal God, 1,000 repudiated Jesus Christ as God, and 3,060 rejected the triune god. Assuming that these figures give a fairly correct notion of the views held by the Christian world generally, then it is clear from them that Christianity has fallen into the trap which proved fatal to all the extinct pagan religions, for 95% of its adherents—in direct opposition to the statement of Jesus that "*God is Spirit*" (John 4. 24)—are simply perpetuating the age-long error of vesting the supreme power in a personal god, the nature of whose personality moreover is so obscure as to provoke great diversity of opinion concerning it. The main Jesus-taught proof of this error consists in its evil fruit: being unable to agree on the most vital and fundamental part of its creed, viz. the question of its God, Christianity has inevitably split up into fiercely contending sects and churches, and,

"Every splintered fraction of a sect
Doth clamour, 'I am on the Perfect Way
All else is to perdition'."

—TENNYSON, "Akbar's Dream."

Hence all the oppression, persecution and bloodshed of Christendom in the past, and the "false doctrines, heresy, and schisms" of the present, and yet the true teaching of Jesus concerning God, is, as he said, so childishly simple that it leaves no room for misunderstanding or disagreement; to realize these facts it is necessary to examine in detail the above three orthodox Christian notions of God.

JEHOVAH AS GOD

The whole account of the Hebrew god contained in the Old Testament history represents him as possessing all those characteristics of the innumerable other heathen gods, which indicated that they were not TRUE. Jesus, having been born of a Jewish

¹ *Daily News*, September 11, 1926.

mother, brought up among Jewish surroundings, and educated in the Jewish tradition, was taught, as Christian children are all taught at the present day, to worship this god and observe the commandments attributed to him, beginning with "I am the Lord thy God, thou shalt have none other gods but me". But though he cold-heartedly complied with part of the Jewish ritual and approved the more essential commandments, yet it is quite certain that Jesus attached little importance to these things, for he invariably sided with those who transgressed them, while their strict observance by the Scribes and Pharisees always roused his unbridled anger. Moreover in his first recorded discourse, after covering himself by saying that he "came not to destroy but to fulfil the law or the prophets" (Matt. 5. 17, etc.), he then proceeded, without any hesitation, to reverse entirely several Jehovah-ascribed precepts one after the other. Jesus may never have openly disavowed the god of his Jewish ancestors, but there can be no doubt whatever that his ideas of God were in all respects exactly opposed to the heathen god characteristics of Jehovah, as will now be shown.

(t) The whole of the Old Testament legends describing Jehovah's appearance in human form, his familiar intercourse and personal dealings with men, are taught and accepted by Jews and Christians as part of God's inspired word, yet these are all decisively contradicted by Jesus in his endorsement of the Baptist's statement "No man hath seen the Father at any time" (John 1. 18, and 6. 46)—this "Father in heaven" was not of the earth, earthly, or semi-human, but a true spiritual God, invisible to mortal eyes, not to be pictured as an imaginary being seated on a throne above the sky, nor associated with a special ark, nor worshipped according to elaborate heathen temple rites and sacrifices, for the God of Jesus was purely "spirit, to be worshipped only in spirit and in truth" (John 4. 24). (r) Further, Jehovah was stated to represent himself as a jealous severely punitive god, and accordingly dealt with a sinful world by sending a flood to exterminate the whole human race, and, quite unreasonably, all innocent land creatures except those required as seed for repopulation: under similar circumstances Jesus describes God as so loving this wicked world that he sent a messenger of truth, not to judge or punish, much less destroy, the offenders, but to save them through his words, explaining clearly God's will and how to do it (John 3. 17, 18)—no capricious irrational avenger was this God, but the very essence of consistent reason. (u) Again Jehovah was merely a tribal god whose cult was confined exclusively to the Jews, and whose whole religious system was specially designed to weld them into a nation of fanatics, united in fierce hostility against all their neighbours, whom in accordance with Jehovah's cruel nature, they were repeatedly and most strictly enjoined to exterminate ruthlessly: "thou shalt smite them, thou shalt utterly destroy them, thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them, neither shalt thou make

marriages with them ", etc. (Deut. 7. 2). But the God of Jesus was the loving Father of all men, Jews and Gentiles alike, God of nature too, who feeds the birds and clothes the fields with grass, and arrays the flowers in all their glorious beauty, thus deserving the title " Father, Lord of heaven and earth " (Matt. 11. 25) : this God was no mere petty local deity fighting against similar mythical godlings, but the world-wide universal Spirit. (e) Lastly the representation of Jehovah's attributes and actions does not suggest any character entitling him to be exalted as God of gods and Lord of lords, or to be in any way superior to the other heathen gods of whom he was so jealous ; this acknowledged jealousy is indeed a tacit admission that he was, or feared he might become, actually inferior to these other usurpers of divinity.

The Moabite Stone—discovered at Dibon, Moab, in 1868, and preserved in the Louvre Museum at Paris—affords an interesting revelation of this close similarity and rivalry between these ancient tribal gods ; it bears an official inscription by king Mesha describing his successful war against Israel, and this detailed account can be compared with the biblical legend concealing the defeat of Jehovah's hosts, which appears in 2 Kings 3. 4, etc. Here is an abbreviated translation of the principal passage in this matter-of-fact inscription : " I am Mesha king of Moab . . . I have erected this stone to Chemosh—the stone of deliverance—for he has delivered me from my enemies, he has avenged those that hate me. Omri was King of Israel and oppressed Moab for a long time, because Chemosh was angered against his people. The son of Omri succeeded him and said ' I will also oppress Moab ', But in my day Chemosh said, ' I will cast my eyes on him and over his house and Israel shall perish for ever '." Mesha then enumerates the towns which he has taken from the King of Israel, Ataroth, Nebo, and Yahas, all captured under the direction and favour of Chemosh, and further states that he " carried away the arels " (probably sacred emblems) " of Jehovah and dragged them along the ground before Chemosh " ; he also speaks of the town of Korkhar which he had built, and where wells and canals were dug by the captives of Israel. "*This inscription, which is the most ancient monument of Semitic epigraphy, clearly shows us the purely national character of the religions of Palestine.*" In it Chemosh plays the part attributed to Jehovah in the books of the Hebrews. If Moab was oppressed by Israel, it was because Chemosh was angered against his people in the same way as Israel explains its servitude by the anger of Jehovah. If Mesha undertook a war, it was in obedience with the orders of Chemosh ; he placed an interdict over the towns and massacred the inhabitants in honour of Chemosh, as Joshua or David did in honour of Jehovah. These are the same ideas and the same expressions".¹

¹ The translation of the inscription given above and the very significant comments following it are taken from the *Historian's History of the World*, vol. II, pp. 109-110, where there is also a good photograph of the stone.

Neither did the worship of Jehovah differ in any essential respect from that of the other pagan gods, nor was it designed to have any elevating influence on the chosen people: it was simply a contract drawn up by their priestly leaders, who guaranteed the worldly favour of Jehovah in return for obedience to priestly rule and exactions. Thus, referring to the previously quoted injunction to massacre their defeated foes wholesale, we read: "And because ye hearken to these judgments and keep and do them, the Lord thy God shall keep with thee the covenant and the mercy which he swore unto thy fathers; and he will love thee and bless thee and multiply thee; he will also bless the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil, the increase of thy kine, and the young of thy flock, in the land which he swore unto thy fathers to give thee . . . And thou shalt consume all the peoples which the Lord thy God shall deliver unto thee; thine eye shall not pity them; neither shalt thou serve their gods; for that will be a snare unto thee . . . Thou shalt not be affrighted at them; for the Lord thy God is in the midst of thee, a great God and a terrible," etc. (Deut. 7. 12, 13, 16, 21). But the God whom Jesus worshipped is represented as possessing an all embracing love, desirous of elevating the whole human race to a similar state of divine love and perfection: "Ye have heard that it was said, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy,' but I say unto you 'Love your enemies and pray for them that persecute you' . . . Ye *therefore* shall be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt. 5. 43, 44, 48). *The only reasonable conclusion from all this is that Jesus deposed this mythical national god Jehovah, rejected his ritual and precepts, abolished his sacrificial worship, and replaced the whole of this religious system by a far more exalted conception of God and his relation to man, which rings TRUE in all respects.*

Some Christians profess to be genuine followers of Jesus in this matter and recognize that these two ideas of God are altogether irreconcilable as in the following statement by a clerical writer: "All that matters, to my mind, is that we go on, and that through our belief in Love, we may go on without fear. Whether you can agree with that depends, I suppose, on *what sort of person* you think God is. If He is a fierce Jehovah, I confess there is little hope; but if He is the God of Jesus Christ, then I cannot believe that His mercy and lovingkindness can ever fail . . . If God be Jehovah then I confess life for me is a mockery, and even a grim joke. But if He be the Father God, then though we may well fear as we set out on the last journey, and though we may speculate and doubt and worry as to where our loved ones are, yet life is working towards

¹ Taken from *Where are the Dead?* pp. 46, 47. This is a collection of press articles written by prominent leaders of thought and upholders of tradition, giving their views on the question indicated by the title of the book.

a purpose—the ultimate triumph and overlordship of Love.” This Christian writer—who is styled “Reverend” but claims to be “only a would-be Christian with a child-like faith”—seems, like most worshippers of Christ, unable to consider God except as some “sort of person”, and consequently must admit that “we may well fear” death, and continue to “speculate and doubt and worry” concerning “Where are the dead”? In fact all the Christian contributors throw no more light on this question than the Jehovah worshipper who said of his beloved dead, “I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me” (2 Samuel 12. 23)—as will be seen later (p. 226 *et seq.*) the correct answer is hidden from all except those who “know the only true God”. But such replacement of the false pagan Jehovah by “the only true God” must be thorough, there can be no half measures: the entire temple and altar worship must be abandoned, all the Mosaic code becomes completely obsolete, as admitted by Paul (pp. 81-2), priestly rule and ritual cease, nay, the whole Old Testament scriptures, so far as they relate to the dealings of this cruel god with his “chosen people”, cannot possibly be the inspired word of the God whom Jesus proclaimed—the unreliable and largely legendary Hebrew records are of great interest to the Jewish race, to archæological scholars, and to students of history, but most certainly they are not what Jesus referred to when he said “God’s word is truth” (John 17. 17).

Nor is this all. There is little use in repudiating a mythical pagan god, only to replace him by another personal god, a deified human being, whose worship is invested with all the idolatrous trappings of the deposed deity—yet this is what Christianity has done, and is doing. It is proposed to show in the following sections that the Christian religion is simply another similar heathen system, opposed in all essential respects to the true teaching of Jesus, consequently that it is false throughout; false in its personal god, false in its superstitious faith, false in its priestly ritual, false in its sacrificial concept and idolatrous worship of Christ, proved false, utterly false, when submitted to the unfailing authoritative test supplied by Jesus himself, “by their fruits ye shall know them” (Matt. 7. 20).

CHRIST AS GOD

As regards the doctrine that Jesus Christ was himself a god it should be sufficient to quote his own definite statement to the contrary in the words “Why callest thou me good? None is good, save one, even God” (Mark 10. 18). It is indeed quite clear that this idea of his divinity was conspicuously absent from his mind at the beginning of his ministry when he admitted that his mission was merely to preach (Mark 1. 38), and in the long record of his first sermon, he most certainly did not teach the people that he was a god to be worshipped; only slowly and reluctantly did he

allow strong suggestions by John the Baptist and his own disciples, aided by the force of popular opinion, to influence him into accepting the rôle of the divinely appointed deliverer, the long-expected Messiah. "By their fruits ye shall know them," was his own test of truth by which this claim must be judged, and there is nothing more certain from the records of his life than that it was this very assumption of divinity which stirred up fierce official opposition to his teaching, causing him "to send not peace on the earth, but a sword" (Matt. 10. 34), to be a peace-breaker, not one of the peace-makers who "shall be called sons of God" (Matt. 5. 9). The enemies so provoked he certainly did not love, but roundly cursed them in this world and the next (Matt. 11. 20-24), and it is significant that this passage—commencing "*Then* began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done"—follows directly after the request of John the Baptist for a definite declaration concerning his Messiahship; the immediate fruit of this baneful idea was hatred of his enemies wherein also he failed to prove himself "Son of the Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 5. 44, 45). The above curse (Matt. 11. 20-24) and his previous answer to John's disciples (Matt. 11. 4, 5), in both of which he vaunts his "mighty works", show how this Messianic obsession perverted the mind of Jesus in regard to the question of miraculous powers: what are described as miracles are in every case violations of the immutable order of nature appointed by God, they are therefore contrary to his established will, and Jesus taught that only "he that doeth the will of God shall enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 7. 21). Further in the next two verses he specifies clearly that it is particularly those claiming to do miracles in his name who shall be excluded from the kingdom of heaven because they "work iniquity"; this is so important that the passage may be quoted fully: "Many will say to me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by thy name, and by thy name cast out devils, and by thy name do many mighty works?' And then will I profess unto them, 'I never knew you; depart from me ye that work iniquity'." This must apply to the alleged miraculous powers attributed to the disciples, and to the whole long sequence of miraculous occurrences recorded in the Acts of the Apostles as the outcome of faith in the miraculous resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ—superstition begets superstition as truth begets truth—and in particular to those miracles of healing actually claimed to have been performed in his name (Acts 3. 6, 16; 4. 10; and 9. 34), as well as to all the ecclesiastical sorcery practised by Christian sects from apostolic times to the present day.

In his simple teaching Jesus did not invoke reversals of nature's course as proof of God's divinity, but on the contrary cited the perfectly natural provision whereby the birds are fed, the fields clothed with grass, and the wild flowers arrayed in all their glory; and further he stated most positively that no such super-

natural evidence would be forthcoming in his own case (Mark 8. 12).¹ If the record be correct, it was only when he was misled into false pretensions on his own behalf that he was induced to support these by endless signs and wonders, such as are usually, though mistakenly, supposed by superstitious people in all ages to be proof of divine powers. Such signs are enchantments whether practised by Pharaoh's magicians or Jehovah's anointed priest (Exod. 7. 10, 11), by prophets of Baal or "man of God" (1 Kings 18. 24), by the sons of the Pharisees or by Christ (Matt. 12. 27, 28), by heathen sorcerer or Christ's disciple (Acts 8. 6-10), by savage "witch-doctor" or his equally misguided "spiritualist" colleague: no matter by what agent or means performed, magic of this kind is simply sorcery, condemned by the Mosaic law as an "abomination unto the Lord" (Deut. 18. 10-12), and enumerated by Paul, not amongst the works of the Spirit but amongst the works of the flesh, concerning which he repeated almost the very sentence of Jesus, that "they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Gal. 5. 20, 21). Yet all these three great biblical law-givers, Moses, Christ, and Paul, are represented as violating their own precepts by being most notable miracle workers and prophets, and it is remarkable that all three failed to attain their respective prophetic goals; Moses did not enter the promised land, Christ did not reappear to that generation in his promised glory, and Paul did not live to see the resurrection as he predicted.

Christ, according to the accepted "divinely inspired" accounts of his life, frequently performed the very three actions he so strongly denounced, for he prophesied the destruction of Jerusalem and other future events; he not only cast out innumerable devils, but actually taught his disciples to do the same (Matt. 10. 1), and did "many mighty works", such as restoring the dead to life, walking on the water, calming a storm, etc. He suggested that he did these things "by the Spirit of God" (Matt. 12. 28), but applying his own argument in regard to devil magic (v. 26), if, by the Spirit of God, acts are performed contrary to God's established order, then God "is divided against himself, how then shall his kingdom stand"? It would indeed have been rent asunder just as surely as the material earth would have been shattered had Joshua caused the sun to stand still upon Gibeon (Joshua 10. 12-14). The kingdom of God according to the teaching of Jesus consisted of the entire universe, which the heavenly Father kept under perfect control, attending even to such minute details as the death of a sparrow, or the number of hairs on a man's head (Matt. 10. 29, 30). Human beings, specially endowed as they are with intelligence and reason, can observe and co-operate with God's will (Matt. 7. 21) as exemplified in the natural

¹ Matthew quotes this twice (Chap. 12. 39; and 16. 4), both times embellishing Mark's plain statement by a fictitious reference to Jonah, falsely making Christ prophesy his resurrection. We shall find later (p. 92) that such procedure forms a constant character of the biblical Matthew.

order of things, and particularly by working together amicably in all their dealings with each other can become "sons of God" (Matt. 5. 44, 45), "perfect as the heavenly Father is perfect" (v. 84), and so inherit his kingdom. This most simple and wholly natural representation of the kingdom of God, and man's relation thereto, has been completely overthrown by a debasing system of Christolatry founded on miracles attributed to Christ, which opened wide the floodgates of superstitious belief in the supernatural.

"An evil and adulterous generation" demanded of Jesus a sign (Mark 8. 12), and although he declared emphatically "there shall no sign be given to them", yet tradition has surrounded his life with marvels in such rich abundance that, during a period of about seventy years, the whole course of nature is represented as turned topsy-turvy by Christ and his followers, in one small part of Palestine, although very complete secular records of that time and place contain no authentic reference to these alleged occurrences. As examples of these startling events may be cited Christ's miraculous conception, a star moving across the sky to indicate his birth-place, the opening of heaven at his baptism, his interview on the mountain with Moses and Elias, his frequent intercourse with angels and devils, his raising the dead, and so on down to the closing scenes when darkness covered all the land for three hours, the earth quaked, the rocks were rent and the tombs were opened, many of their dead occupants coming forth alive (Matt. 27. 45-53), until the final astounding statement that the risen Christ having announced that, "these signs shall follow them that believe; in my name shall they cast out devils, etc. . . . was received up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God" (Mark 16. 17, 19). Now even if all these fabulous happenings were not paralleled by similar myths and legends surrounding most other religious teachers and heroes in ancient history, even if they were confirmed by secular chronicles, even if Jesus had not repudiated such signs and wonders, nay, even if they be accepted as true, what *have* they to do with the kingdom of God as revealed by Jesus, except to annul completely its three essential perfect ideals? (1) Perfect God, represented as the supreme Father "perfect in heaven" and so complete in himself—an ideal utterly destroyed by the grossly pagan notion of seating another god, incarnate, with "body, bones and flesh" (as the Church article of faith No. 4 crudely states), alongside this heavenly Father. (2) A perfect order of creation, God-ordained and God-maintained—an ideal completely frustrated by all infractions of this natural order, such as the miracles referred to above, which are therefore described as "iniquity" by Jesus. And (3) Perfect humanity obtained only by man's compliance with this perfect order, in other words by doing the will of the heavenly Father, thus becoming perfect like him, and so worthy to enter

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doctrines of faith in an incarnate god as a sacrificial offering for sin, faith in endless superstitious legends and miracles associated with his life and death, and faith in all the ceremonies and sacraments connected with his idolatrous worship.

This concept of the miracle-working Christ as a god is, then, directly opposed to the true teaching of Jesus concerning the kingdom of the heavenly Father or "only true God" (John 17. 3), and must therefore be wholly false. This statement seems conclusively confirmed by the evil fruits that immediately followed Christ's presumptuous claim to divine honours: one has only to read the narrative of events succeeding the proclamation of his Messiahship at what is called his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, in order to see how this resulted in his speedy downfall, in his premature and violent death, and in his final dying admission that so far from being a god he was actually forsaken by God: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (p. 194). Are we not justified in suggesting that it was really Christ who had forsaken his God by his attempted usurpation of divine power? Whether this explanation be accepted or not, *the all important incontrovertible fact is that in this dying utterance of Christ we have his own most solemn assurance that he was not a god, and that being rejected by God he could not be an acceptable sacrifice for the sins of the world, even if we dishonour God by supposing him to require such an atonement.* Submitting the question of Christ's divinity to the fourfold test we may say then, (t) it is not true because Jesus disclaimed being a god and preached that the only true God was the Father of all, including the preacher himself. (r) It is not rational to accept endless legends of miraculous occurrences as proof, especially as Jesus expressly stated that he would work no supernatural sign; (u) such sorcerous infractions of God's universal order are in fact condemned by Jesus as "iniquity"; and finally (e) the doctrine that Christ's death was a sacrificial sin offering, rewarded by his elevation to godhood, is a dishonouring pagan conception of God, entirely opposed to the exalting ideas preached by Jesus. Consequently the whole system of Christolatry—the worship generally accorded to the miracle working Christ as the second person of a divine trinity, and as the redeemer of the world by his death on the cross—is proved completely false both by the TRUE teaching of Jesus, and by Christ's own last words.

THE TRIUNE GOD

It is related of the Roman Catholic theologian Augustine that while puzzling over the question of the trinity, he saw a vision of a little child scooping out a small pit in the sand of the seashore and then pouring into it spoonfuls of water out of the ocean. When asked what he was doing the child replied that he intended to ladle all the water of the sea into the hollow in the sand, and when

Augustine pointed out the utter impossibility of such a thing, the child answered that it was just as impossible to understand the mysterious doctrine of the trinity—and then vanished. Notwithstanding the vision this prelate is stated to have wasted nearly thirty years writing a fifteen-volume treatise on the subject, thus showing at least that the ecclesiastical ideas concerning a tripartite deity are vastly different to the plain child-like teaching of Jesus in which God is simply the heavenly Father, creating, pervading, controlling all things throughout the universe, and therefore not a personal but a spiritual God—"God is Spirit" (John 4. 24). It is false to represent this divine spirit as a *person* co-equal with two other *persons*: it is contrary to this true word of Jesus to make the material body of Christ the second person of a triune godhead, especially in view of his dying admission that his God had forsaken him; as regards the remaining person to whom is ascribed the first place in this trinity, so far as Christian theology is concerned, he must be "the unknown God" (Acts 17. 23) whose nature and identity are alike a mystery, for if he be neither flesh and blood like the second person, nor Spirit like the third, then what else is he? By accepting the Jewish scriptures which proclaim their national god, by promulgating these as the divinely inspired word of God, and by adopting their commandments beginning "I am the Lord thy God", Christendom is irrevocably committed to recognizing Jehovah as the first person of the trinity, notwithstanding that he is represented as tolerating "none other gods" but himself, and in spite of the fact, too, that he was, as shown above, merely a cruel pagan national godling, deposed by Jesus in favour of the true spiritual loving Father of all. And yet, extraordinary as it may seem, this incongruous trinity occupies the most prominent part in the Christian faith, and to make "confusion worse confounded" it is embodied in the official creeds and articles of religion associated with a mass of myths and miracles, contrary to reason, and opposed to the true teaching of Jesus. We have seen that the essence of all the false-priest-taught religions from time immemorial consists in the cult of mysterious personal gods, and now it appears that the Christian faith, with its incomprehensible trinitarian doctrine and associated sacramental mysteries, is, in these respects, a typical example of such pagan creeds: we may well enquire then how the enlightened preaching of Jesus has become so completely perverted.

The "Apostles' Creed", in which the trinitarian errors are officially stated, indicates by its title that these are derived not from Jesus but from his "unlearned and ignorant" disciples, whose expectations concerning the Christ prevented their understanding his true spiritual teaching. But the apostles could never have propagated their crude superstitions only that they found a powerful ally in Paul—"not meet to be called an apostle" (1 Cor. 15. 9)—*who in reality was responsible for leading Christendom astray by preaching many things in direct opposition to the true teaching*

of Jesus, of whom he knew nothing personally, and, according to his own account (Gal. 1. 16-19), very little from the genuine apostles. Conspicuous amongst these Pauline errors is the trinitarian doctrine, the outcome of the following factors: Paul's intensive early training in the worship of Jehovah, as a Pharisee of the strictest sect (Acts 26. 5), which rendered him, according to Jesus (John 8. 43, etc.), actually incapable of understanding God's word of truth; as a consequence, though profoundly moved by his imaginary vision of Christ, yet this, he admits himself, did not "convert" him from his Pharisaism (Acts 23. 6), but merely caused him to graft Christ worship on to the Jehovah ritual, a proceeding not only fiercely condemned by Jesus in the case of Paul's fellow-Pharisees in the temple (John 8), but also contrary to Jehovah's first commandment. In order to retain his cherished worship of the jealous Jehovah and yet combine it with that of Christ, Paul was forced to regard these two personal gods as united into one by a third spiritual element—and thus was evolved the utterly false trinitarian doctrine which proved its corrupt nature by giving rise, as we shall see, to endless subsidiary errors, and consequent bigotry, strife, and persecution. Paul's struggle to reconcile these three conflicting ideas of godhood can be clearly traced all through the narrative of his life in the 'Acts'; it is apparent too in his discourses as recorded in the same book, and it is quite evident from his authentic letters; a glance at these three sources will show that we are dealing here with the real origin of the trinitarian error.

In the plain straightforward account (Acts 9) of the incident which changed the whole course of Paul's life there is no mention at all of God: the words of the voice are: "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest, but rise and enter into the city and it shall be told thee what thou must do" (vs. 5, 6), and when he obeys, Ananias tells him, "*The Lord, even Jesus, hath sent me*", etc. (v. 17). Paul himself recounts this incident in chapter 22, but here, having stated that Ananias was a "devout man according to the law", he now puts into the mouth of this strict Jew the message, "*The God of our fathers hath appointed thee to know his will and to see the Righteous One*", etc. (v. 14). Again in chapter 26, Paul repeats the description of this occurrence, but this time he ignores Ananias altogether, for he has now 'persuaded' himself that the heavenly apparition gave him the entire message, commissioning him "to turn the Gentiles from the power of Satan unto God", who is consequently no longer the Jehovah god of the Jews alone. These three accounts of the same occurrence show interestingly not only how 'revelations' are hatched by exaggerations, creeping into the narratives of ordinary events, but also how Paul's ideas of God in this case centred first exclusively on the new man-god, then the "god of his fathers" and of his childhood and early life resumes sway over his mind, and finally this jealous national god is superseded by the benevolent God of all mankind. In conformity with

this the narrative states that Paul began his Christian ministry by "proclaiming Jesus that he is the Son of God" (Acts 9. 20); he insists that baptism in Christ's name, and in his name only, is efficacious (Chap. 19. 1-5); he performs a miracle in Christ's name, (Chap. 16. 18), and when he tells the frenzied jailor to "believe in the Lord Jesus", this man is reported to have been baptized immediately "having believed in God" (Chap. 16. 31-34). But although Paul thus, in his recorded actions, recognized Christ as God, yet he endeavoured to combine his worship with that of Jehovah, for as he himself declared: "I confess unto thee that after the Way which they call a sect, *so serve I the God of our fathers*, believing all things which are according to the law and which are written in the prophets" (Chap. 24. 14): accordingly he bows himself down in the house of Rimmon (Chap. 22. 17), and conforms to all the various ritual practices such as purifying himself in the temple (Chap. 21. 23-26), "circumcising Timothy because of the Jews" (Chap. 16. 3), and shaving his head because he "had a vow" (Chap. 18. 18). And yet neither the man-god Christ nor the pagan god Jehovah really satisfied him, for on several occasions he is credited with preaching the true spiritual God; thus he implores the idolators of Lystra "to turn unto the living God who made heaven and earth" (Chap. 14. 15), and he is frequently stated to have preached "the kingdom of God" (Chap. 19. 8), indeed in the last chapter the writer of the Acts twice repeats this expression (vs. 23, 31), on both occasions giving it precedence over the teaching about Christ mentioned separately.

Next let us see how this variable threefold idea of God is reflected in Paul's discourses as recorded in the Acts. In chapter 17. 2 it is related that Paul "for three sabbath days reasoned with the Thessalonians from the scriptures", or as he himself described it, he "imparted unto them the gospel of God" (1 Thess. 2. 8, 9), and this "gospel of God" is clearly stated in the next verse (Acts 17. 3) to have been entirely concerned with the doctrine that "Jesus, whom, said he, I proclaim unto you, is the Christ". Turning next to chapter 13, we find a long verbatim report of Paul's exhortation in the synagogue of Antioch, which speaks for itself as being, all through, an attempt to combine the cult of Jehovah with the doctrine that Christ was Jehovah's appointed sacrifice for sin, as proved by his resurrection from the dead. Paul indeed might be here the spokesman of the treasury Pharisees (John 8. 30, *et seq.*) so exactly does he express their exclusive Jewish prejudices and arguments: they pleaded their birthright freedom being God's chosen people (v. 33), they pleaded they were sons of Abraham and heirs to the covenant God made with him (v. 39), and finally they pleaded God was their Father (v. 41), but Jesus rejected all these pleas with the utmost derision, calling them indeed the offspring of the devil (v. 41). So, too, Paul begins (Acts 13. 17) by proclaiming how "the God of this

people Israel *chose our fathers* " freeing them " with a high hand from Egypt ", and raised up David to be king, and " *of his seed* according to promise brought *unto Israel* a Saviour " (v. 23) ; then he represents to his " Brethren, children of the *stock of Abraham* " that this victim was sacrificed to Jehovah by the people and rulers of Jerusalem as prearranged by this god (vs. 27, 29), who signified his approval by raising the victim from the dead (vs. 30-33). This tragedy with its sequel—priestly " murder " as Stephen called it before the guilty high priest himself (Acts 7. 52) —Paul describes as " good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers " (v. 32). Very different however was the God preached by Paul to the sage philosophers of Athens (Acts 17. 22-31) ; to these almost too zealous sifters of truth from every new doctrine (v. 21), he revealed in his customary beautiful language the true universal " God that made the world and all things therein, the Lord of heaven and earth "—" who giveth to all life and breath and all things—who is not far from each one of us—in whom we live and move and have our being ", in fact the very selfsame " Lord of heaven and earth " (Matt. 11. 25), the same God the Spirit, Father of all, creator and controller of the universe, preached by Jesus as " the only true God ". And, as in the case of Jesus, the audience listened attentively, for all men, Jew or Gentile, ignorant or cultured, must always listen to what heart and mind alike recognize to be the plain truth concerning God ; it was only in his closing words referring to the raising of Christ from the dead to act as judge of all the world that Paul lapsed into misleading superstition which naturally moved his discerning critics to mockery.

In a similar manner Paul's shifting threefold idea of God can be traced through his writings : thus, turning to one of the earliest of all his epistles, 1 Thessalonians, we find the man-god Christ playing such a prepondering part in the fanciful account of the end of the world (1 Thess. 4. 13-17), with its final consummation " so shall we ever be with the Lord ", that it would really seem as if " the word of the message of God " (Chap. 2. 13, and Acts 17. 3) to the Thessalonians simply meant God's abdication in favour of the risen Christ. This " determination not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified " (1 Cor. 2. 2), persists all through and is indeed most strongly evident from what are probably Paul's last written words, his farewell message to Timothy (2 Tim. 4) ; here, after a casual reference to God in the first verse it is " Christ Jesus who shall judge the quick and the dead ", and so—following Paul's very pharisaic approval of himself as a by no means " unprofitable servant " (Luke 17. 10)—it is " the Lord, the righteous judge " who must award him his crown (v. 8), it is the Lord who will requite his enemies (v. 14), it is the Lord who stands by him (v. 17), it is the Lord who will deliver him (v. 18), and finally in his concluding salutation it is to the Lord he commends Timothy's spirit (v. 22). Paul claimed to " please all men

in all things " (1 Cor. 10. 33), but it was evident that his Thessalonian account of the expected reappearance of Christ could please neither Jews nor the true followers of Jesus, since it took no account either of Jehovah or of God the Father whom Jesus preached. Recognizing this Paul corrected it in his next epistle (1 Cor. 15. 20-28), where he gave another forecast of this fabulous event, in which Christ, the Son of God, is now relegated to the quite superfluous rôle of his Father's temporary regent, subjugating his enemies by his Father's authority, until the final remarkable conclusion, " then shall the Son also himself be subjected to him that did subject all things unto him that God may be all in all " (v. 28). In this way Paul modified his extreme Christolatry by acknowledging the supremacy of God, and naturally this supreme God would be the Jehovah whom he had been so strictly trained to worship from his early childhood, and naturally too, he would not try to press this jealous national god of the Jews on the Corinthian converts (1 Cor. 2. 2)—as he said to them himself " being crafty I caught you with guile " (2 Cor. 12. 16).

Similarly we cannot expect to find this " god of his fathers " figuring in any of the nine ecclesiastical epistles bearing Paul's name, for these all without exception were addressed to Gentile churches, but we may be quite sure, from his own statements and practice, that if Paul had written a letter of this kind to any Jewish community he would have represented the Supreme God as the exclusively Jewish god, from whose worship he was supposed to have been " converted " by his vision—in his own words he would have become " to the Jews as a Jew that he might gain the Jews " (1 Cor. 9. 20). This is not mere speculation, for it so happens that the New Testament contains just such an epistle, written anonymously by a zealous Christian Jew for the benefit of Jews—therefore called " the epistle to the Hebrews "—and this Jehovah-exalting letter is so unmistakably Pauline in its argument, sentiments, similes, language, pontifical tone and general plan, that there can be no reasonable doubt Paul was the author of it, and in fact it is so superscribed in both Authorized and Revised Versions. The doctrinal part of this epistle (Chap. 1 to Chap 10. 18) is simply an elaboration of the Antioch synagogue theme that Christ's death was a special sin-offering to the Jewish god Jehovah, belief in which superseded the Mosaic code (Acts 13. 39), but in the epistle Paul represents the sacrificial victim as exalted to be a perpetual celestial high priest (Chap 7. 24, 25, etc.), seated at Jehovah's right hand, where he " ever liveth to make intercession " lest this fierce relentless deity should break forth at any time with his " consuming fire " (Chap. 12. 29). This is the Jewish version of what Paul refers to over and over again as " *my* gospel " (2 Tim. 2. 8 ; Rom. 2. 16, etc.), and to which he actually gives precedence when he mentions it along with the preaching of Jesus Christ (Rom. 16. 25).

Both Jesus and Paul considered the Old Testament covenant

to be worthless and sadly in need of replacement—as Paul discreetly put it to his Jewish brethren (Heb. 8. 7-13), “If that first covenant had been faultless then would no place have been sought for a second”—and so, having unearthed a scriptural quotation (Jer. 31. 31) concerning God making “a new covenant with the house of Israel after those days”,¹ he proceeds, “*In that the Lord saith ‘a new covenant’ he hath made the first old. but that which is becoming old and waxeth aged is nigh unto vanishing away*”. Though agreed on this main point, yet the fiercely anti-ritualistic Jesus, and Paul, the born and bred strictest Pharisee, were diametrically opposed to each other in their religious outlook. Jesus could no more have preached Paul’s mealy-mouthed pro-Jewish Antioch sermon than could Paul have violated all the customs and traditions of temple worship in the way Jesus did, and when they both alike were moved to withstand the high priest, Jesus, the smitten arch-antagonist of priestly rule, boldly answers: “If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil, but if well, why smitest thou me?” (John 18. 23); whereas Paul, the servile slave of ecclesiasticism, though defiant of secular authority, cringes at once to the priestly power, replying cantingly: “I wist not brethren, that he was high priest: for it is written ‘Thou shalt not speak evil of a ruler of thy people’” (Acts 23. 5).² Is it any wonder then that these two men should have evolved two entirely different systems or ‘gospels’ to replace the effete Judaism?

Paul’s scheme was simply a repetition of Jehovah’s original covenant to Abraham and his descendants, with all its faults magnified, for according to the long quotation twice cited by him (Heb. 8. 8-12, and Chap. 10. 16, 17), the new covenant was to be between the same contracting parties, Jehovah on the one hand and the house of Israel on the other, while the cruel offering of bulls and goats, etc., now pronounced useless for taking away sin (Chap. 10. 4), is replaced *on Paul’s sole authority* by another similar, and what he considers a more efficacious, human propitiatory sacrifice (Heb. 10. 10-12, etc.), with the same ecclesiastical accompaniments of altar, temple, and priestly ritual. We repeat the very important statement that this perpetuation of the obsolete Jehovistic law, “without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins” (Chap. 9. 22), rests solely on the authority of Paul, for although he is in this epistle “reasoning *according to the scriptures*, opening and alleging that it behoved the Christ to suffer” (Acts 17. 2, 3), yet in his twice cited extract from Jeremiah (31. 31-34)—which Paul

¹ As usual in such new testament quotations from the prophets this extract originally referred only to the expected restoration of the Jewish nation after their captivity in Babylon, and has therefore no further application.

² This is one of the texts that is held to explain Paul’s “thorn in the side” as being defective eyesight, but surely his own challenging words “sittest thou to judge me” show that he knew well he was speaking to a “ruler of his people”.

evidently advances as the most reliable, if not the only, support he can find for his erroneous doctrine—*there is not the slightest suggestion that "the new covenant" involved the suffering and violent death of an innocent human victim as necessary for blotting out sin.* On the contrary the extract states explicitly (Heb. 10. 16, 17), "this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and on their heart also will I write them: and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more": that is all—not one single word about any expiatory sacrifice—and obviously this covenant agrees quite well with the gospel of Jesus, "he that doeth the will of God shall enter into the Kingdom of heaven", except that this promise is not limited to "the house of Israel".

But though Paul's gospel of Christ's sacrificial death entitling him to be the second person in the trinity finds no support from his Old Testament quotations it seems at first sight to receive very remarkable confirmation from the record regarding the institution of what is known as "the sacrament of the Lord's supper"—particularly the text, "This is my blood of the covenant which is shed for many (Mark 14. 24), unto remission of sins" (Matt. 26. 28)—but closer investigation leads most unexpectedly to an entirely contrary conclusion. In order to make this clear, and indeed to form any correct idea of New Testament matters, a few points usually ignored by the casual Bible reader must first be considered.

Jesus Christ and his followers were so convinced the end of the world was at hand that they naturally never thought of writing an official "gospel of God" (Mark 1. 14), consequently it was not until fully twenty years and more after the death of Christ—when in fact the survivors began to suspect they were deceived in regard to the imminent second advent—that attempts were made to write records for the benefit of those coming after, who could have no personal knowledge of "the things wherein they were instructed" (Luke 1. 1-4). Since the principal characters concerned were extremely ignorant and almost incredibly superstitious, it is not surprising that their reminiscences of long bygone events, recorded in these early narratives, were held in very little esteem by the more intelligent members of the early churches, as stated by Bishop Papias writing about a century after Christ's death.¹ The earliest and least unreliable of the synoptic gospels seems to be that written by Mark in the form—according to Papias who ascribes his information to "John the elder"—of very accurate but quite disconnected jottings of Christ's doings or sayings mentioned by Peter in his teachings. We learn from the same source that *in the days of Papias, Matthew's contribution was represented only by a collection of the principal sayings and discourses of Jesus, originally written in Aramaic, "which every one translated as he best could"*. It appears

¹ Quoted by Eusebius, *Eccles. Hist.* III. 39.

as if the biblical gospel assigned to Matthew was compiled by church scribes in the second century from these defective Greek translations, supplemented by copious extracts from Mark's gospel—altered, as we shall see (p. 92), so as to agree with current ecclesiastical doctrines—and a liberal addition of purely legendary matter connected with the life and particularly the birth and death of Jesus Christ. The latter description, as regards copying from Mark and the addition of legendary matter, applies generally to the gospel ascribed to Luke, written, together with "the Acts of the Apostles", probably under the direction of Paul, with whom he was so long and so closely associated.

In this connection it is to be noted that the first twelve chapters of "the Acts" are concerned chiefly with the doings of Peter, while in the remainder of the book Paul plays the prominent part, which agrees with the account that, after a brief outburst of activity following his "conversion", Paul seems to have retired to his native country Cilicia for about fourteen years (Gal. 1. 21, and 2. 1), apparently owing to fierce dissensions with the genuine apostles at Jerusalem; his departure to Tarsus is recorded in Acts 9. 30, and is perhaps significantly followed immediately by the statement "So the Church throughout all Judæa, etc., had peace". It is evident indeed even from his own writings that Paul did not number humility among his many outstanding virtues, and would never have willingly washed the feet of the apostles as Jesus ordained both by precept and practice (John 13. 4-17). Thus he made himself so intolerable that Mark "withdrew from the work", and in consequence Paul later on had "a sharp contention" with Barnabas, so that they also separated: he boasts that he held no intercourse with the Apostles whom Jesus chose and taught for three years (Gal. 1 and 2), declaring, "from those who were reputed to be somewhat—whatsoever they were it maketh no matter to me—they I say who were of repute imparted nothing to me"; and even when he relates how James and Peter and John, deferring to his superior education and intellectual attainments, gave him the right hand of fellowship, (Gal. 2. 9, 10), he refers to them ungraciously as "reputed to be pillars", and in the very next verse has no hesitation in challenging the good faith of the premier pope of Rome, "resisting Peter to the face because he stood condemned (v. 11). Clearly Paul would not have subscribed to the Romish doctrine of papal infallibility, unless perhaps he himself had been elected chief wielder of that power, as indeed he seems to have been by Christendom generally. Certainly he established his claim: "I reckon that I am not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles. But though I be rude in speech yet am I not in knowledge" (2 Cor. 11. 5, 6, and 12. 11), for he finally ousted the foundation rock of the Christian Church, took upon himself "the care of all the churches" (2 Cor. 11. 28), and ordained what was to be done in them (1 Cor. 7. 17): he laid down endless precepts without any

reference to the teaching of Jesus, filled his epistles with his own ecclesiastical gospel of "things hard to be understood" (2 Peter 3. 16)—in contrast to the easy yoke and light burden of the gospel preached by Jesus—and apparently acted so autocratically that in his last written letter he had to admit: "This thou knowest that all that are in Asia turned away from me" (2 Tim. i. 15); justifiable admiration for Paul's splendid personality must not blind us to these facts.

Bearing all the above considerations in mind we can now apply them to show how *Paul, and not Jesus Christ, was really responsible for instituting the sacrament of "the Lord's supper"*, which has become such an essential element in the worship of the sacrifice-exacting Jehovah that it is accepted by all orthodox Christendom as "generally necessary to salvation", although it forms no part of the "gospel of God" preached by Jesus.¹

Turning then to Mark as the most authoritative of the biblical accounts, we find there (Chap. 14. 22-25) that Jesus simply distributed the bread and wine without any injunction to the disciples to celebrate the action regularly in his memory—in other words Peter's description of the last supper did not include any formal institution of a sacrament. Next Luke's description (Chap. 22. 14-20) deserves close attention because it offers a quite simple explanation of what actually happened at the last supper, and shows how, and by whom, the true record of it became corrupted. The key to its elucidation is that Luke's version contains two separate accounts of the incident, one, the true description by a reliable eyewitness, Peter, accurately reported by Mark, and correctly quoted—except for one alteration to be explained presently—in verses 14 to 18 by Luke, who as a fellow eyewitness knew it to be true; the other, grossly misleading, was copied in verses 19 and 20, almost word for word from Paul (1 Cor. 11. 24, 25), who had no personal acquaintance with the facts—and it seems to have been inserted at his instigation in order to authenticate, and amend, his false sacrificial and sacramental doctrine: *it was because Luke's copy of Mark's version contained nothing at all to confirm Paul's error that Luke was apparently induced by Paul to add on his erroneous version for this purpose*; we shall try to prove these statements clearly by examining the two accounts separately, beginning with Luke's extract from Mark.

Let us take first the two verses 17 and 18 in Luke 22: "And he received a cup and when he had given thanks, he said, 'Take this and divide it among yourselves; For I say unto you I will not drink from henceforth of the fruit of the vine until the Kingdom of God shall come.'" Note how characteristic this is of Jesus, especially

¹ The reader will only be able to follow the ensuing most important discussion if he first peruses the four short biblical accounts of the last supper, in Matthew (26. 26), Mark (14. 22), Luke (22. 14) and 1 Corinthians (11. 23), and keeps his Bible open at these places for reference.

the reference to the kingdom of God, but note still more how naturally the one verse follows the other, Jesus handing the wine round, and as it were telling the disciples to excuse him for not drinking himself. Now, turning to Mark (Chap. 14. 23-25) we find indeed these two verses almost exactly as Luke copied them, but their beautiful sequence is here destroyed by the clumsy insertion of the very text to which we have referred (p. 83), as apparently supporting Paul's ideas of atonement: its words, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is shed for many" sound strange in Christ's mouth, and would have been meaningless to the disciples, for Jesus never mentioned any such blood-sealed covenant, but on the contrary they are exactly the words of Paul, so is the sacrificial concept, so is the whole tenor of the text, which forms the gist of his "gospel" of "the new covenant" ratified by Christ's crucifixion, as elaborated in his epistle to the Hebrews, now under consideration. Further we know from 2 Timothy, chapter 4 that Paul was with Luke (v. 11), who in his writing copied freely from a manuscript of Mark's narrative—doubtless included amongst "the books and parchments" referred to in verse 13—so Paul was in actual touch with this document at the critical moment. Being the man he was he would have thought himself fully entitled to interpolate this text if he thought it true—he would have scorned the idea of the ignorant Peter's account being regarded as the unalterable and inspired word of God—with the result, of course, that this altered copy would become authoritative, and be repeated in later transcripts, leading the compiler of the much later gospel of Matthew astray, and thus getting eventually into the Bible as a quadruplicate but solely Pauline error. It is scarcely necessary to add that the interpolation of verse 24 about "this is my blood" would involve a corresponding insertion of the words "this is my body" in verse 22 to complete the sacrificial simile.

There is, then, strong biblical evidence that Paul made these alterations in the original text of Mark in order to bring it into agreement with Luke's account, to which he had already imparted an entirely false sacrificial and sacramental tone by getting Luke to include in it the quotation from his epistle to the Corinthians. One thing seems quite certain, the wholly Pauline text, Mark 14. 24, was not in the manuscript from which Luke transcribed his two obviously consecutive verses, ch. 22. 17, 18, else he would assuredly have copied it also, more especially as, by so doing, he would have saved himself from the awkward artifice of describing Christ as taking the cup a second time, merely in order to pronounce these same Pauline words (v. 20). This leads to the observation that just as Luke's verse 18, beginning "For I say unto you, I will not drink", etc., was associated with the distribution of wine, so verse 16, beginning similarly "For I say unto you I will not eat", should be preceded by the distribution of the bread, which, however, Luke omits from this quotation; the reason for this

omission is the same as in the case of the wine. If the words "this is my body", in Mark 14. 22, had been in Luke's manuscript of Mark, he would naturally have copied that versé in full, and this would have amply confirmed Paul's sacrificial "gospel" without dragging in the superfluous quotation from his epistle (1 Cor. 11. 24, 25), contained in verses 19 and 20: but because these very important words were absent in the original unaltered manuscript, Luke could only support Paul's views by reproducing his official statement about the bread in verse 19, and so, of course, to avoid another duplication, he had to omit Mark's reference to breaking the bread, thus depriving verse 16 of its proper prelude. If, however, we repair this defect by simply inserting in Luke's version the omitted unaltered text (Mark 14. 22, without the words "this is my body") we shall have the whole quotation intact, precisely as Mark accurately recorded it when the words fell from Peter's lips: it is well worth while to reproduce the full correct extract with its connections, not only because it makes quite clear all the points in the above explanation, but also because it is such a perfect description of the event, so concise yet quite complete, so obviously true in every detail, and so very simply expressed. We begin at Luke 22. 13:

"And they made ready the passover. And when the hour was come he sat down and the apostles with him; and he said unto them, 'With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer.'

And as they were eating he took bread and when he had blessed he brake it and gave to them, and said 'Take ye—For I say unto you I will not eat it until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God'

And he received a cup and when he had given thanks, he said, 'Take this and divide it among yourselves: For I say unto you I will not drink from henceforth of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come'

And when they had sung a hymn they went out unto the Mount of Olives."

By thus merely restoring a single displaced verse Luke's first account appears exactly as he copied it from the original unaltered Mark, and (t) this is our only True reliable source of information in this matter, for the three gospel versions are only spoiled reproductions of it (r) it is such a Reasonable account that it requires no explanation; (u) it is devoid of all controversial matter so ought to be Universally acceptable, and (e) it is so Exalting that it connects even the taking of food and drink with the kingdom of God—it is in all respects TRUE. This inherently true and complete account of the last supper, containing apparently the exact words of Jesus, represents then Mark's accurate report—certified as such probably by the apostle John, and certainly by Bishop Papias, who was in close touch with apostolic times (p. 83)—of the description given by one apostolic eyewitness, Peter, none other than the reputed first pope of Rome, and audited, as it were, by another apostolic eyewitness, Luke, yet this account, notwithstanding

such altogether unique and satisfactory credentials, can never be accepted by Christendom. Why? Simply because it proves uncontestably that, on this momentous occasion, the mind of Jesus was entirely free from those sacrificial and sacramental errors, which, through Pauline influence, have completely dominated Christianity since his time: in fact *this TRUE record, by lending no support either to the Pauline gospel of Christ's atonement, or to the institution of the eucharist by Jesus, goes a long way towards discrediting the former, and completely disproves the latter*, thus depriving the Christian Churches of the two most essential elements in the worship of Christ, on which depend largely their power and revenue.

Naturally Christian priestcraft will move heaven and earth in opposition to such dangerous "heresy"; let us, therefore, see what can be said about the opposing Pauline view of the last supper, quoted by Luke in Chapter 22. 19, 20, adopted by the Church, and set forth fully in its consecration prayer of the Communion service as follows: "Almighty God . . . who of thy tender mercy (sic) didst give thine only Son Jesus Christ to suffer death upon the cross for our redemption; *who . . . did institute and in his holy gospel command us to continue a perpetual memory of that his precious death . . . grant that we, receiving these thy creatures of bread and wine, according to thy son our Saviour Jesus Christ's holy institution*, in remembrance of his death and passion, may be partakers of his most blessed Body and Blood: who . . . took Bread, and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, 'Take, eat, this is my Body which is given for you: Do this in remembrance of me'. Likewise after supper he took the Cup; and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, 'Drink ye all of this; for this is my Blood of the New Testament, which is shed for you, and for many for the remission of sins: Do this as oft as ye shall drink it, in remembrance of me', Amen." Strictly speaking the only gospel claiming the title "gospel of Jesus Christ" is Mark (Chap. 1. 1), and we have already noted that even in its incorrect biblical form there is no mention of any such institution or command by Jesus; but as the expression "his holy gospel" evidently means here the various New Testament accounts of the last supper—by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and Paul, who are all made to contribute towards the above jumbled and most misleading description of the supper—we must briefly consider these in turn, taking Luke first.

This evangelist was in the difficult position of having to explain to his readers "how they might know the certainty" (Luke 1. 4) about the last supper, in view of the fact that Peter, by word of mouth, and Mark in his written record, had widely distributed Peter's account, which Luke as a partaker of the supper knew to be true, while on the other hand the pontifical Paul, who had charge of all the Churches, in one of his early epistles—equally widely known (2 Peter 3. 15, 16)—had published a very different version which he

claimed to "have received of the Lord" (1 Cor. 11. 23). In this conflict between actual knowledge of fact and asserted divine inspiration, the conscientious Luke decided—unlike the Church in its prayer—to record both accounts so accurately that there could be no mistake as to their respective origin, keeping the facts separate and putting them first. We have already dealt with the portion containing the facts as narrated by Peter, reported by Mark, and reproduced by Luke in his chapter 22. 14-18, and here is the Pauline version from his epistle, 1 Corinthians 11. 23-25: "The Lord Jesus in the night in which he was betrayed took bread. And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, 'This is my body which is for you; this do in remembrance of me'. In like manner also the cup after supper, saying 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood; this do, as oft as ye drink *it* in remembrance of me'." Plainly Luke has copied this almost word for word in his verses 19 and 20, but he made one extremely important alteration by omitting Paul's closing sentence, "This do as oft as ye drink *it* in remembrance of me", and substituting a different ending, *thus deliberately cancelling Christ's apparent command and institution of one half of the sacramental rite*; Luke would never have dared to oppose Paul on such a crucial point, unless he were sure that the cancelled statement was quite wrong, and it is certain Paul found by experience that the sentence was a source of disorder (1 Cor. 11. 20, 21), so in all probability he himself actually prompted Luke's alteration.

Consider the command carefully and note first that the word "it" is printed in italics signifying its absence in the original text; the insertion of this insignificant looking word gives the entirely wrong impression that the passage refers to drinking the blood of the covenant contained in the cup. Surely neither Christ nor Paul would have suggested anything so naturally abhorrent, so repeatedly and strictly forbidden in the Mosaic Law (Lev. 3. 17, and Deut. 12. 16, 24, etc.), against which Jehovah had "set his face" (Lev. 17. 10-12), which was a sin against the Lord in the days of Saul (1 Sam. 14. 33), and of Ezekiel (Chap. 33. 25), and which was actually included amongst the special pollutions from which the Gentile Christians were to refrain (Acts 15. 20, 29). Seeing then that the consumption of blood from animals used for food or sacrifice was so rigidly prohibited how can Christians believe that such a revolting practice was ordained in regard to the infinitely more sacrosanct blood of Jehovah's choicest human victim? Leave out the extraneous word "it" and the command reads correctly, "this do, as oft as ye drink, in remembrance of me"; this is not a command to drink; it assumes the drinking; but it lays down that, whenever they drank, the disciples were to do something else, something apparently that Christ was then actually doing himself, and something therefore that, when repeated, would recall him to their remembrance. What was this all important but unmentioned action? It certainly was not to lay hands on the cup in token of

consecration as priests do, for Christ did not bless *this* cup · it was not to drink from it, as priests do, for Christ assuredly did not do this : it was not to distribute it to others, as priests do, for *on this occasion* there is no mention of Christ handing it to the disciples, or in fact doing anything at all with the cup. So far as this Pauline version is concerned there is no authority for these ecclesiastical proceedings, nor is there any direct indication regarding what is meant by the mysterious words "this do"—but perhaps we can find this out directly.

The Church by most misleadingly prefacing the above command in its prayer with the words, "Drink ye all of this; for this is my blood . . . Do this as oft as ye shall drink it in remembrance of me" has perpetuated an extremely fruitful source of error and strife, beginning with the drunken orgies of the early Corinthian converts (I Cor. II. 21), and continuing to the present day as fierce controversies over eucharistic questions; in a vain attempt to stem this evil, Luke, most probably under Paul's direction, replaced this equivocal command with just six words which offer a clear explanation of what the obscure, deleted passage "this do", etc. really referred to; these six illuminating words are, "which is *poured out* for you". Paul evidently pictured to himself Christ, about to be "led as a lamb to the slaughter", rising from his seat "*after supper*" when eating and drinking were finished, taking in his hands a cup containing some wine dregs, *and slowly pouring out the contents on to the ground*, "saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you (Luke 22. 20), *this do* in remembrance of me'" (I Cor. II. 23). The cancelled Pauline command therefore had merely instructed Christians as often as they drank to pour out a little in remembrance of Christ; this was obviously in imitation of Paul's cherished Jewish ritual, for in Leviticus 4 the instruction that, "all the blood of the sacrifice shall be *poured out* at the base of the altar", is laid down no less than four times (vs. 7, 18, 25, 34), and numerous repetitions and instances of this "pouring out" of the blood of atonement might be cited (Lev. 8. 15, and 9. 9, etc.). It was the wine thus *poured out* on the ground which alone could represent the blood *shed* in atonement, and obviously wine so poured out could not be drunk, while it is the grossest impiety to drink symbolically what would be an utter abomination to drink in reality. This sacred blood was never under any circumstances to be drunk by Jew or Christian, symbolically or actually, although the priests of the Christian Churches, fallible and infallible, have so misinterpreted Paul's command for nearly nineteen centuries.

In like manner too, the words, "This do", etc., as used by Paul in his verse 24, refer to Christ's actions in regard to the bread, and to these only : they are clearly stated—he took the bread, he gave thanks for the bread, and he broke the bread, but he did not eat the bread, nor did he hand it to his disciples to eat—*thus giving no*

authority for the other half of the sacrament. It is indeed most noticeable that in Luke 22. 14-18, describing what actually took place at the supper, there is no mention at all of the body and blood of Christ, and the words 'eat' and 'drink' occur repeatedly, whereas in the following verses, 19 and 20, containing Paul's sacramental representation of the body and blood there is no injunction to eat or drink, in fact these terms do not even occur. We may say then positively that so far as concerns these two most important accounts by Luke and Paul respectively, no ecclesiastical authority can claim any sanction from Christ's actions and words on this occasion, either for themselves eating and drinking consecrated elements as a sacrament in remembrance of his death, or giving such to the laity.

We have already shown that this last remark applies to the original version of Mark's gospel from which Luke copied his account, and it is only through the falsification of this true version by the Pauline insertions found in the biblical Mark that a semblance of support is given by this gospel to the sacrificial and sacramental view. It has been pointed out (p. 86) that the clumsy interpolation of the obviously Pauline text about "this is my blood" (Mark 14. 24) necessitated the addition of the complementary words "this is my body" (v. 22), to complete the sacrificial picture. But this compulsorily inserted passage in turn revealed its false nature by doing still further mischief to Mark's original narrative, as can readily be shown. It will be noticed that Luke's verse 16 which so naturally followed Christ's words "Take ye" in the original manuscript (p. 87) does not appear in the biblical Mark at all—it has been ousted by the intrusive words "this is my body". The reason for this deletion at once becomes apparent if the reader puts himself in the place of the Pauline interpolator, and does what he did: that is to say, take the true original version (p. 87), and try to push the cuckoo phrase, "this is my body", into the position he made it occupy in order to form the biblical Mark, and it will be seen that the extraordinary result is to make Christ say he will not eat his own body here, but will do so in heaven; the consequence of course was—since the phrase, "this is my body", *had* to be inserted in order to balance the other interpolation, "this is my blood"—that Luke's verse 16 was of necessity ejected from Mark, leaving Christ to give his disciples the bread with the crude unexplained remark, "Take ye; this is my body", as it is in the biblical Mark ever since. Remove these evidently false and mischievous interpolations—verse 24, and the words "this is my body" in verse 22—restore the verse, Luke 22. 16, expelled by their insertion, and again we get the true original narrative exactly as written down by Mark from Peter's dictation, in which there is most emphatically nothing at all to support the sacrificial and sacramental views of Christ's death adopted by the Christian Churches.

The compiler of Matthew's account (Chap. 26. 26-30) copied almost verbatim from the mutilated version of Mark, repeating its errors and exaggerating them by inserting the word "eat" before the words "this is my body" (v. 26), turning the sentence "they all drank of it", into the command "Drink ye all of it" (v. 27), and adding the expression "unto remission of sins" (v. 28); here then for the first and only time we find some gospel foundation for the Church's consecration prayer and the proceedings accompanying it in the Communion service. But a little reflection shows that the above alterations must be viewed with the utmost suspicion, for we have seen that this gospel is very different from the collection of discourses that Papias knew under the name of Matthew (p. 83); the discourses with which the biblical Matthew is studded may perhaps represent more or less the genuine record of this apostle, but the rest of this gospel is written by someone who, unlike Luke (Chap. 1. 3) and John (Chap. 21. 24), does not claim to have been an actual eyewitness, who depended largely on Mark for the details of Christ's life, whose work was quite unknown to Papias writing about a century after Christ's death, who mentions (Chap. 28. 15) that he lived at a period late enough for many myths and doctrinal errors to have become established as authentic by the Church, and who *evidently wrote with the special purpose of confirming these false ecclesiastical dogmas*. This last important statement is justified because the Pauline gospel of Christ's sacrificial death, fully set forth in his epistle to the Hebrews, was the prime source of these ecclesiastical superstitions and errors, and it cannot be denied that the writer of the biblical Matthew ransacked the Old Testament scriptures for prophetic references which might in any way support this idea that Jesus was the promised Messiah, the long expected Christ, according to Paul Jehovah's appointed victim, and the second person of his trinity, in the endeavour to establish this main thesis the biblical Matthew inevitably became the chief apologist for all the tributary false doctrines associated therewith, such, for example, as trinitarian baptism (Matt. 28. 19), the Church's usurpation of power to remit sins (Chap. 16. 19), the institution of the eucharist (Chap. 26. 26), and its sequel, the loathsome doctrine of transubstantiation—all which errors are the very essence of Pauline ecclesiasticism adopted by Christendom, but have neither part nor lot in the beautiful simple gospel of Jesus. It is necessary, therefore, to remember, in dealing with what is called Matthew's gospel, that apart from its discourses, it is really a very late and unreliable production, and that where we find in it cut and dried dogmas of the Church, which are contrary both to the spirit and True records of what Jesus taught, as well as contrary to common-sense Reasoning, which were neither intended nor suitable for Universal acceptance, and which are the reverse of Exalting—in other words which are in no way TRUE—they should be unhesitatingly rejected, even though

the Churches maintain that these must be accepted as part of what they pronounce to be God's inspired word.

The above alterations in Matthew's quotation from Mark regarding the institution of "the Lord's supper" afford a typical instance of this. (t) All the other gospel records are against Matthew's rendering. The writer of John, who leaned on Christ's breast at the supper, actually makes no reference to this strange "command" in his gospel, an omission which could only be explained by the occurrence being simply the ordinary distribution of bread and wine, as recorded by Peter, who was present at the time, and confirmed by Luke, a third partaker of the meal, who reproduces Peter's description almost unaltered. On the other hand, a Church, founded under Paul's direction nearly twenty years after the event, adopted his symbolic representation of the incident, but apparently misinterpreted it, and so established a sacrament for which there was no other authority, until this gospel of Matthew was written much later, *copying but altering the previous accounts in exactly the manner required to justify the Church's procedure*. Both these conflicting accounts are regarded as divinely inspired, but there can be no doubt which is true; surely the positive evidence of two reliable eyewitnesses that no such command or institution of a sacrament was given by Christ, a statement supported by the significant silence of a third eyewitness and recorder of the event, must be accepted in preference to a purposely garbled transcription by an unknown writer of much later date. (r) Common-sense reasoning tells us that Christ, who had so frequently described in this gospel how he would return in great glory before that generation passed away (Chap. 10. 23, 16. 28; and 24. 34), would scarcely stultify himself by instituting a rite for future generations, as "a perpetual memory of his precious death". (u) There is nothing in Matthew's version to indicate that the words put into Christ's mouth had any universal application or were meant for anyone but the disciples to whom they were addressed, and, even in their case, they evidently only referred to that particular occasion, since there is no mention here of the injunction, "do this in remembrance of me", as so falsely stated in the Church's consecration prayer. (e) Anything more debasing or revolting than the doctrine of transubstantiation can scarcely be imagined, yet Christians are really taught to accept, not only the statements of this gospel, that Christ miraculously changed the bread and wine into his own actual flesh and blood, and positively commanded his disciples to eat and drink these, but also that this miraculous power was transmitted to the disciples, and through them to Christian priests in all succeeding generations. Although the above consecration prayer makes request that the recipients may be "partakers of Christ's most blessed Body and Blood", and reproduces the exact words of command in this corrupt version "*Eat, this is my body*",

and "*Drink*, for this is my blood", which originated the doctrine of transubstantiation, yet this execrable idea seems to find little favour amongst those Christians who retain and use their freedom of religious thought, since, according to the questionnaire previously quoted, only 1,456 out of 14,043, or roughly 10% of those who replied, asserted that they accepted this wholly pagan doctrine: if the remaining 90% were consistent they would reject not only transubstantiation but also the entire sacrament, since both alike are based on the sole authority of Matthew's utterly false version of the last supper.

We can, then, trace the complete evolution of the eucharistic error as "commanded and instituted in the holy gospel", by beginning with Peter's original TRUE account of Christ's words and actions at "the Last supper"—restored on page 87—which is entirely free from all sacrificial and sacramental suggestion. In accepting and reproducing this Luke added separately Paul's amended but still misleading symbolic interpretation. In the biblical Mark these two versions were clumsily interwoven—as they are cunningly in the Church's consecration prayer—giving a very disconnected and quite erroneous narrative. Lastly this was still further perverted later by the unknown writer of the biblical Matthew, with the express purpose of authenticating the Church's unwarranted adoption of the sacrament, thereby countenancing the culminating error of transubstantiation.

Further completely convincing proof that Christ never instituted "the sacrament of the Lord's supper" is furnished by the account in "the Acts of the Apostles" concerning the doings of the early Christians, for throughout the whole of this record, extending over the first thirty years or so after Christ's death, *there is no mention of the apostles ever celebrating the sacrament*: there are indeed occasional references to "breaking of bread", but it is quite clear that this phrase merely describes the ordinary "taking of food" and in fact these two expressions are used alternatively in Acts 2. 46 and again in Chapter 27. 34-36. Sometimes the custom was to "break bread" at home, sometimes at their place of meeting, and in the latter case, where we might expect some formal ceremony (Chap. 20. 7), Paul is actually described as breaking the bread and eating (v. 11), without any preliminary blessing, although he ostentatiously gave thanks before eating on board the ship (Chap. 27. 35), where there was no question of any religious ceremony. Nowhere then in this record are the apostles stated to have broken bread in remembrance of Christ, nowhere are they described as drinking wine in his memory, nowhere did they administer this sacrament to the sick and dying, or as an adjunct to the ecclesiastical "remission of sins"; truly the Church is as wise as the serpent in this matter, for who can estimate the vast amount of treasure poured and ever pouring into its coffers in return, directly or indirectly, for the "consolations of religion" afforded to credulous

dupes by this heathenish sacrificial sacrament with its associated fictitious absolution? Just as the apostles practised none of these things themselves, so neither did they instruct their converts "to continue a perpetual memory of Christ's precious death" by means of this sacrament. Further, nowhere in this record did the apostles claim or exercise the miraculous power of transforming bread and wine into that flesh and blood, which they childishly believed to be seated on a throne in heaven, ready to descend at any moment: nowhere did they pretend to transmit such miraculous power to their helpers and successors, so no priest of any Church can claim true apostolic precedent or authority for this practice at the present day; and nowhere, nowhere, in all this record of their acts are they represented as consuming even symbolically the flesh and blood of Jehovah's human sacrifice, or inducing others to do so. The reason the apostles never carried out the command—attributed to Christ in Matthew's spurious version of "the Lord's supper", and accepted as authoritative by the Christian Churches—can only be because, as shown above, Christ neither issued such a command nor instituted such a sacrament.

In the next place seeing that Christ did not ordain, and his true apostles did not celebrate, this sacrament, it almost necessarily follows that Paul, who had "the care of all the Churches", must have been responsible for originating the ceremony, and his own words and actions confirm this completely. The earliest mention of the sacrament in the Bible is in an epistle, pre-dating all the gospel narratives, written by Paul to the Greek Church at Corinth (1 Cor. 10. 16), where he had spent eighteen months (Acts 18. 11), founding it on a ritualistic basis, for, shortly after his departure, dissensions broke out in connection with those two sacraments which might be said to be generally necessary to the separation of Christians, that is to say baptism (1 Cor. 1. 11-17), and "the supper of the Lord" (1 Cor. 11. 17-34): Paul's letter was intended to settle these disputes, and his long explanation concerning the eucharist in this eleventh chapter deserves close attention here.

The most important point to note is that, in verses 23 to 25, he admits he himself had delivered to these Christians what he declared to be Christ's injunction to do two things in his memory, namely, when eating their food to break off a piece of bread and leave it uneaten as Christ did, and "in like manner" to perform a similar but undescribed action in regard to their drink. Those were times of danger and persecution for Christians, and possibly Paul was here suggesting that this twofold means of recalling Christ's sacrificial death would serve another purpose, by being also useful as a method whereby Christians could recognize each other when travelling about and eating in strange places: the first action might inadvertently be performed by any one, and so be mistakenly responded to by someone else at the table, but if followed by the second sign "proclaiming the Lord's death", there

could be no doubt, and other Christians present would reply by repeating the action ; those so doing would be in communion with each other, through their communion with Christ, and the stranger would thus be introduced to the Christian community of the place even though he might not understand their language. This would explain why Paul left it to be inferred what the words " In like manner . . . this do ", etc., meant in regard to the cup of wine, and it would also show why, when this quotation was altered by Luke in his gospel so as to include its explanation, " which is poured out for you ", then the command " this do in remembrance of me " was omitted ; the sign had to be kept secret else it would on occasions have betrayed Christians into the hands of their enemies.

But whether this suggestion be accepted or not, it seems that what Paul originally delivered to the Corinthians was a simple method by which every Christian, at his ordinary meals, was to recall to mind Christ's sacrifice—it was a clear command to do in Christ's memory the two things which, according to Paul, had been done by Christ himself, namely to break the bread, symbolizing that he gave his body to be broken on the cross, and to pour out the wine, an action representing the shedding of his blood ; it was in the first instance not a church ceremony at all, there was no suggestion of priestly consecration of food and drink, and it quite obviously was not an injunction to remember Christ by doing the very things he declined to do, that is to say, eat the bread and drink the wine. But Paul was a born and bred ritualistic Pharisee (Acts 23. 6), moreover he was " all things to all men ", and was dealing with Greek and Jewish converts accustomed to elaborate temple ceremonies, while further still the early Christians had the habit of eating and drinking at their place of meeting—under these circumstances it was almost inevitable that an apparently harmless custom, and perhaps useful sign, should degenerate into an idolatrous heathen rite, that the rejected sacrificial altar of the Greeks and Jews should be restored in the form of what Paul called " the Lord's table " (1 Cor. 10. 21), and the sacrifice be replaced by the " creatures of bread and wine ", the consumption of which was sanctioned by Paul, and was entitled by him, " the Lord's supper " (1 Cor. 11. 20) ; thus was inaugurated *the entirely Pauline* eucharistic ceremonial, which promptly developed into Bacchanalian revelry in anticipation of the imminent second advent, akin to Christmas carousals in honour of the first advent. But this was the least of the evil fruits of this evil tree. By means of this ceremony Paul provided Christendom with the most essential requisite in all pagan religions, the false but ever popular cult of a personal heroic god : by means of this ceremony Paul restored to both Jew and Gentile converts their familiar sacrificial worship, which Jesus actually gave his life to destroy (p. 194) ; and by means of this ceremony, with its associated ecclesiastical " remission of sins ", Paul enabled his Church to usurp a terrible power over the minds and bodies

and worldly goods of its superstitious adherents, which it has never ceased to exploit in its own worldly interests. *In fact by means of this ceremony, the unconverted Pharisee Paul committed Christendom to his own gospel and ecclesiastical system, embodying all the essential errors of creed, ceremonial, and priestly code, common to the worship of Jehovah and every other false pagan god, but bearing no resemblance whatever to the simple true teaching of Jesus.*

One apparently serious objection to the above explanation must be refuted before passing on ; in the preface to his description, Paul pleads that he acted in this matter under Christ's authority, for he asserts (I Cor. II. 23), "*I received of the Lord* that which also I delivered", etc., but as Paul had never seen Christ in the flesh, it is clear that he merely believed he had received some supernatural revelation on the subject, and we know from "the Acts" (e.g. Chap. 16. 6, 7, 10) that the early Christians were wont to claim such spiritual inspiration for any sudden idea, strong conviction, or ordinary dream. We know from many recorded instances that Paul was particularly prone to delude himself in this way ; we have seen that his plain matter-of-fact conversation with Ananias was magnified by him later into a special message direct from Jehovah, and so too, the very circumstantial account of his return to Jerusalem, his presentation to the apostles, and his "going in and going out with them" (Acts 9. 26-28) are all vehemently denied by Paul in Galatians 1, where he claims : "the gospel which was preached by me is not after man. For neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but through revelation of Jesus Christ." Similarly in this case Paul was well acquainted with the current accounts of the last supper, and, influenced no doubt by seeing the common Greek custom of pouring out libations both in honour of their gods and in ratification of their treaties and contracts, it would naturally occur to him that Christ might have appropriately done the same with the wine on that occasion. The bread and wine symbolizing the body and blood of Christ seemed to lend such strong support to Paul's false idea of Christ's death as a cruel sacrifice exacted by the vengeful Jehovah, and seemed to agree so well with his erroneous notion of Jehovah's new covenant being sealed with blood like the old one (p. 83) that Paul needed little self-persuasion in order to become convinced, not only that Christ had actually performed this heathen rite at the supper, and imposed it on his disciples, but also that, long after his death, he miraculously imparted this information to Paul himself, who delivered it in his name to the Corinthian Church.

All this is strictly in accordance with Paul's mentality and statements, but his conviction in this matter was most certainly not TRUE. (t) It was not true because the disciples who were present and are supposed to have been divinely inspired to describe what took place at the supper, make no mention of such a solemn rite being performed and ordained by Christ ; (r) it is not rational

to believe that Christ, years after his death, miraculously revealed to Paul a special command which could have been issued quite naturally to those who partook of the supper; (u) if Paul really "received of the Lord" instructions to institute this ceremony, surely the proceeding should have been universally adopted, yet there is no record of its acceptance by the true apostles at the headquarters in Jerusalem, nor indeed by Paul in any of the other churches: in fact it appears that Paul tried the effect of introducing this sacrament in the Corinthian Church and, finding it only a source of revelry and disorder, did not ordain it elsewhere, just as he discontinued baptism for similar reasons (1 Cor. 1. 14); (e) there was nothing in the least exalting about this heathen ceremony, even in its original form of a libation, intended to recall the cruel shedding of Christ's blood as a sacrifice to a vengeful god—there was nothing in it to remind Christians of the really exalting teaching of Jesus, that the heavenly Father was a god of mercy, requiring no sacrifice, but freely forgiving men their trespasses if they forgive their fellow men—so, naturally, this pagan rite revealed its debasing character by at once creating disorder in the Church, and by the evil fruits associated with it ever since. But though Paul may have renounced this degrading sacrament, the Christian Churches never will, as long as it provides them with such a powerful hold over the minds and pockets of the superstitious faithful, who can be induced to believe anything and pay anything for "the remission of sins".

It is well that Paul's gospel of Christ's sacrificial atonement to appease Jehovah finds no support either in his Old Testament quotations concerning the new covenant (Heb. 8. 8-12), or in the pure teaching of Jesus, for his imaginary picture of Jehovah's heaven in the epistle to the Hebrews is so depressing, that, were it true, most people would surely approve the statement already quoted (p. 71), "if God be Jehovah then I confess that life for me is a mockery, and even a grim joke". On the authority of this epistle Jehovah's heaven is a Jewish temple on a vast scale, where Jesus Christ—who hated Jehovah's priests, who was hated by Jehovah's priests, and who was murdered (Acts 7. 52) at the instigation (Matt. 27. 20) of Jehovah's priests—becomes himself "a priest *for ever* after the order of Melchizedek" (Chap. 7. 21-25), a priest who "abideth *for ever* and hath his priesthood unchangeable", a priest who "*ever* liveth to make intercession": there being no end to this eternal priestly intercession means that the implacable Jehovah can never be appeased, sin and suffering, sorrow and punishment can never cease, and the Mosaic ritual must continue perpetually in heaven, except that, sacrificial torture having reached its limit, there can be no more offering for sin, and no more pardon for those who fall from grace. In Paul's own words "a man that hath set at nought Moses' law dieth without compassion" but the transgressor against the new covenant shall receive "much sorer

punishment", since in this case "there remaineth no more a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgement, and a fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries" . . . "For we know him that said 'Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense'" (Heb. 10. 26-30). We do indeed know that the god of this epistle is none other than the cruel, jealous Jehovah of the Jewish scriptures, the false mythical personal deity, represented as acting so irrationally towards the human race, as the purely local national god of the Jews, as a blood-loving ogre, in fact as a typical pagan god, in no respect TRUE, yet worshipped by Paul, who installed him as the first person in the Christian trinity. But what Christendom does *not* know, or does not realize, is, that this most unworthy god was renounced by Jesus, who cancelled his vindictive ordinances, repudiated his ritual and sacrificial worship, scorned his magnificent temple, enraged his priests, showered curses on his most zealous worshippers, the Scribes and Pharisees, and endeavoured to substitute for all their travesty of religion a pure, rational, lofty ideal of the one spiritual God and Father of all, to be worshipped only in spirit and in truth.

This naturally leads to the last phase of Paul's theology, his recognition of the third element in the trinity. He believed himself inspired to teach that at any moment that generation might see the heavens burst asunder and Jehovah and Christ, seated on thrones, appear to judge the world, but pending this imaginary event, Paul and the apostles were quite convinced that all their ideas and actions were guided by the spirit of these heavenly gods: thus in Acts 16. 6 we read they were "forbidden by the Holy Ghost to speak the word in Asia", in the next verse "the Spirit of Jesus suffered them not to go into Bithynia", and in the second next verse Paul dreamed he had a missionary call to go into Macedonia, and they at once started off "concluding that God had called us for to preach the gospel unto them", although, as events proved, there was nothing to justify such a supernatural intervention. This invisible Spirit was indeed from the beginning a more real presence than the two inactive personal deities enthroned in heaven, and a glance at the New Testament shows that it occupied a prominent place in all Paul's writings. In the early letters these three elements of his theology are perpetually referred to separately, but in the later epistles they tend to be mentioned consecutively as in the threefold benediction at the end of 2 Corinthians (Chap. 13. 14), and in several texts in the next epistle to the Romans (Chap. 14. 17, 18; and Chap. 15. 16, 30).

Naturally such repeated suggestions of a triple godhead resulted in the early Church—which owed its foundation mainly to Paul, and in return pronounced his writings to be divinely inspired—accepting this false doctrine, and then of course sooner or later converts had to be baptized, not in the name of Jesus Christ, as was the orthodox custom adopted by the apostles and Paul, but in the

names of the threefold deity. When it was recognized later that there was really no authority for such a practice, then the so-called Matthew's gospel—written be it remembered long after apostolic days—was made to fulfil its purpose of supporting the Church's false doctrines, by receiving as a suitable ending the impressive command to "baptize all nations in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matt. 28. 19). that this command is entirely false is proved in the same way as Matthew's similar fictitious "command" regarding the sacramental eating and drinking of Christ's body and blood. In the first place it is contrary to both the teaching and practice of Jesus during his lifetime, it is distinctly stated (John 4. 2) that he did not himself baptize, and though he allowed his disciples to do so, yet nowhere else did Jesus command them to perform this ceremony, either in his own or any other name, and surely if he attached any importance to the rite he would not have gone to his death ignoring it in this way. Further the contemporary recorders, Peter in Mark's gospel, Luke, and John make no reference to any such evidently legendary parting command, for though the admittedly false ending to Mark's gospel (p. 143), does refer casually to baptism (Mark 16. 16) yet even this spurious text makes no mention of the trinity, which is the special point at issue here. But still more convincing is the incontrovertible fact that, just as in the case of the other sacrament, *the apostles are never reported as carrying out this command, for there is actually no case on record in the New Testament of anyone baptizing or being baptized in the names of the triple gods*, showing conclusively that the command to do so is entirely fictitious, and was only inserted at the end of Matthew's gospel in order to give a semblance of authority to a flagrant Church error. The Christian Church has therefore no genuine authority for such practice, either from Jesus, or from his true apostles, or even from Paul, who only baptized in the name of Jesus (Acts 19. 2-6), and apparently thought so little of this strife-provoking ceremony that he says: "I thank God that I baptized none of you . . . for Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel" (1 Cor. 1. 14-17).

But Paul cannot escape responsibility for establishing the doctrine of the tripartite godhead, and as he had been brought up under the jealous Jehovah's stern law, "Thou shalt have none other gods but me", and had to deal largely with strictly monotheistic Jews, he was practically compelled to prove somehow that these three gods were really only one—and this was the method he adopted. In his first epistle to the Corinthians he tells his Christian converts that "ye are Christ's and Christ is God's" (Chap. 3. 20), that "the head of Christ is God" (Chap. 11. 3), and that Christ must "be subjected to him . . . that God may be all in all" (Chap. 15. 28)—but if God be indeed "all in all" then he must needs be Spirit, the universal Spirit, something vastly different to the personal god of the Hebrews. Further Paul seems to

reason that Christ, being so intimately associated with this spirit God, must necessarily likewise be spirit, and so we find the sudden declaration in the next epistle (2 Cor. 3. 17, 18), "Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty", the expression "Lord the Spirit" being repeated in the next verse. This prepares the way for the final climax in, perhaps, the last of Paul's church epistles, the Ephesians, where (Chap 4. 3-6) he insists on the unity of the Spirit, of the Lord and of God, so that there is "One God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all"—this is the natural conclusion from the recognition that each of these three imaginary separate elements is Spirit, for Spirit is essentially indivisible ("one God"), inherently creative ("Father of all"), and all pervading ("over all and through all and in all"). Thus did Paul the subtle theologian perceive the sublime truth "in a mirror darkly", but this did not prevent him holding fast to his personal gods, whom he separates again at the end of this epistle (Eph. 6. 23). He was indeed all things to himself as well as to all men, and so we have found Paul the ritualistic Pharisee "serving the god of his fathers" by continuing his worship in the temple at Jerusalem, and expounding to his Hebrew brethren that Christianity was simply another new and more satisfactory covenant between Jehovah and the house of Israel. we have found Paul the devoted Christolater beginning his last dying message to Timothy thus (2 Tim. 4. 1): "I charge thee in the sight of God and of Jesus Christ," and then concentrating all his attention on the latter personal god: and we find Paul the apostle to the Gentiles filling his writings with much ornate spiritual mysticism suitable to more intellectual converts—but nowhere do we find Paul sitting at the feet of the disciples learning from them the simple truth they had heard from Jesus, consequently the much divided Christian Church founded by Paul follows his lead in all these matters. It continues to worship the cruel pagan Jehovah, believing the legendary accounts of his dealings with the Jews to be part of the divinely inspired word of God, acknowledging his moral code beginning "I am the Lord thy God" etc., and following closely Paul's imitations of his temple and altar ceremonial. It continues to worship Christ, Jehovah's "new covenant" victim, as the second personal element in a trinity, it adopts the heathenish practice of eating his body and drinking his blood as instituted by Paul, and it teaches that he is seated in human form on a throne in heaven from whence "he shall come to judge the quick and the dead", exactly as Paul falsely taught he would come during his lifetime, nineteen hundred years ago. And finally the Christian Church adopts Paul's makeshift union of these two false personal gods with the true universal Spirit so as to form a wholly incomprehensible triune god, the cult of which has prevented countless millions of people from knowing "the only true God whom to know is life eternal", as taught by Jesus.

We may now sum up this long section as follows. The Christian doctrine of a triune God is entirely due to Paul combining his worship of Jehovah with that of Christ; (t) it is not true because to admit a tripartite deity composed of three persons, one Spirit, one a human personality of flesh and blood, and one apparently neither of these, is opposed to the true teaching of Jesus that "God is Spirit", for spirit is essentially indivisible and impersonal; (r) it is not rational to regard the unknown element in this trinity as the mythical Jehovah, whose legendary covenant with his chosen people, according to Paul himself, demanded the "blood of bulls and goats . . . and priestly ministrations, the which can never take away sin" (Heb. 11. 4, 11); these had been duly and lavishly rendered for centuries in Jehovah's magnificent temples, yet neither he nor his priests had prevented repeated national disasters, such as the Babylonian captivity and Roman subjugation; there was therefore no reason for believing that a new covenant with the same faithless deity would be more efficacious, even though sealed, on Paul's sole authority, with the blood "of a better sacrifice" (Heb. 9. 23), of an innocent human victim, of the crucified Christ. The only rational thing to do with such a false and cruel god was to depose him, and accept instead the one true spiritual God who desires "mercy and not sacrifice"; this was the gospel of Jesus which Paul ignored and replaced by his own irrational imitation of the Jewish ecclesiastical system, adopted to its sorrow by Christendom ever since. (u) Such a trinity of gods could never be universally accepted, for it was contrary to Jehovah's own stern law, "Thou shalt have none other gods but me", and when Paul tried to circumvent this by claiming his three gods to be one, a trinity in unity, he was forced to adopt unwittingly the teaching of Jesus, that God is the only true universal creator Spirit—in Paul's own words there is "one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all". (e) In spite of this Paul seems to have retained to the last his belief in his two false personal gods, and the debasing nature of his doctrine of a triune god is revealed by the rich legacy of error, superstition, religious strife and deadly hatred, which it bequeathed to posterity.

In fact Paul's false gospel of Christ's death as a sin offering exacted by a cruel god almost inevitably involved acceptance of all the following errors—acceptance of the trinitarian doctrine, of the pagan Jehovah and his imaginary "new covenant", of the sealing of this with Christ's blood, of Christ's resurrection and ascension, of a material heaven where these two personal gods are seated on thrones side by side, of the sacramental feasting on Christ's body and blood, of ecclesiastical power to remit sins through this heathen rite, of baptism in the name of the trinity, of Christ's perpetual intercession in heaven, of Jehovah's insatiable vengeance, of all the horrors of the imaginary future judgment, of the

divine inspiration of the scriptures which record all these errors, and generally speaking acceptance of the whole Pauline ecclesiastical system, and the endless gross superstitions and evil fruits associated therewith. Some of these errors have been exposed above, and others will be refuted as we proceed further, but even the mere enumeration of these items is sufficient to show that we are dealing here with a gospel that is in no respect TRUE, and has nothing to do with the pure teaching of Jesus.

As long as Christianity consists in worshipping a trinity embracing the mythical Jehovah, and his sacrificial victim the flesh and blood god Christ, it must continue to be merely another pagan creed doomed to constant strife and ultimate extinction: it can only be transformed into the genuine TRUE religion of the future by rejecting these false personal elements, with all their associated errors and retaining the third, the spiritual element; for this divine universal Spirit is the truth dimly perceived by primitive man and his savage successors to this day, the truth behind all religions ancient and modern and underlying recent facts of science, the truth that makes men free from personal idols and their ecclesiastical agents, the truth which Jesus declared he came into the world to testify, and which he *did* testify in the words, "God is spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4. 24).

CHAPTER IV

RATIONAL

A rational separation of the true teaching of Jesus from all the falsity connected with the Christhood

READING the Bible is with most Christians a matter of duty, especially dull and uninteresting to young people, who would much prefer to read a thrilling novel or detective story, and yet the simple fact is that its only really essential part, the life of Jesus Christ, might well be the pattern on which the most exciting modern fiction is formed, only it is far more fascinating as will appear when sketched briefly from this point of view. It is the story of a young and most attractive hero, living among very superstitious people nearly two thousand years ago, who found a real treasure of inestimable value, such as no modern novelist ever yet imagined, and who, being most anxious to share it freely with everyone, offered it to the priestly rulers of his country for this purpose; with almost incredible perversity they not only declined to have anything to do with it themselves, but in order to prevent others benefiting by it actually murdered its discoverer in the most abominably cruel manner. Now the hero left no written record of his treasure, but in the biblical narrative there are four confusing and conflicting accounts of it by his associates, three of which, written by Jews, are more concerned with trying to reconcile the hero's life and teaching with current Jewish superstition, than in reproducing his truth, which they never really grasped. With the aid of an influential Pharisee this misinterpretation was however widely accepted, but it was based on a definite promise that the hero would return to earth, at a specified time, in order to reward richly all who believed this explanation—and the promise was never fulfilled; so the biblical story ends most unsatisfactorily with a fantastic forecast of this wholly imaginary event and a despairing appeal to the hero to "come quickly".

This brings the story up to the last part of the first century in the Christian era, but there is a terrible sequel to it in the historical records of the succeeding eighteen centuries, during which the successors of the hero's priestly murderers, who are the arch-villains of the story, succeeded in reviving this fable so as to acquire great wealth and power thereby, which they employed

in pursuing a long career of outrageous tyranny and oppression. *In fact, nearly all the worst evils from which Christendom has suffered throughout the Christian era are more or less attributable to the adoption of this false interpretation of the hero's words, and the world can never become right until it learns and practises the true meaning of his message.* For herein lies the absorbing interest of the story—it does actually contain in the true “gospel of God” preached by Jesus a secret of priceless practical value to the world at large, and to every individual in it, but as the hero himself said, “few they be who find it,” because the world persists in following its “blind guides”; this makes the quest of the truth all the more exciting. In all stories where there is a mystery to be solved or a treasure to be found, the essential factors are to obtain a reliable source of information, to interpret its clues correctly, and then to follow out carefully these indications. The hero of the biblical story insists on all this; he guarantees his words, *and these only*, to be divine truth, and promises success exclusively to those who hear and do them; we can scarcely fail to find the treasure if we forsake all other guidance, for the records, though faulty, reveal the secret quite clearly, and show how completely the Christian world has been led astray in this matter.

TRUE

Orthodox Christians agree more or less that the biblical story of Christ's life is true, together with the claim that he was the Son of God sent into the world to be sacrificed for the sins of humanity, and the statement that after his death he rose again and ascended into heaven, whence he shall come again to judge both the living and the dead. This is the Christian creed forced into the minds of all Christian children from infancy upwards, till it gets such a hold of them that they are usually either unable or unwilling to question it when they come to years of discretion: and yet the only authority for this creed is the ecclesiastical declaration that the Bible from which it is extracted is the divinely revealed “word of God”; it is evidently most important to test this fundamental pronouncement.

In the first place the Old Testament, which forms roughly three-quarters of the Bible, consists of ancient Hebrew writings, legendary, historical, and poetic, in which the name of Jesus Christ never once occurs, so that this book has practically no relation at all to the Christian faith. In fact, as we have seen, the Jewish Old Testament is markedly antagonistic to the Christian New Testament in such essentials of religion as its worship of the cruel national god Jehovah, its elaborate sacrificial ceremonial, and its cult of fierce enmity against all Gentile nations, with the result that the Jews, who naturally regard these scriptures as

sacred and authoritative, are bitterly opposed to and by Christianity. Many earnest thoughtful Christians, unable to approve its pagan ideas and incredible superstition, discard what they call "the old dispensation"—which, they maintain with Paul, has been replaced by a "new covenant"—though they consider that it is in the main historically correct, and contains much that is worthy of acceptance; but this does not explain why the god of this testament deliberately misled even "his chosen people" for hundreds or thousands of years, by these "faulty" (Heb. 8. 6-8) revelations which had to be superseded. All this does not look like "divine revelation" of the Old Testament, but suggests rather that the Christian's "new dispensation"—which is really only a Pauline imitation of the old (p. 82), and which likewise bristles with most extraordinary demands on our credulity—must, in its turn, be replaced by the plain straightforward representation of divine truth that Jesus claimed was revealed to, and preached by, himself, as recorded in the four gospels.

Turning then to the New Testament we may note that the scribes of the early church, who were responsible for the transcription of this portion of the "revealed word", were by no means impressed with its sacred character or divine origin, since they had no hesitation about inserting into it their own often fallacious precepts, doctrines, and questionable explanations. If however the scriptures were themselves divinely inspired, and the Church chose and altered them at will, this could only mean that the ecclesiastical authorities considered themselves endowed with the divine authority stated to have been conferred on Peter in the extraordinary verses, Matthew 16. 17-19, "thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my church. I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven", etc. Now a glance at the corresponding references in Mark (Chap. 8. 27-30) and Luke (9. 18-21) shows that this passage is a spurious insertion, for all three accounts are similarly worded, except that the two verses 16 and 20 in Matthew's version, which follow each other consecutively both in Mark and Luke, have been forced asunder by the writer of Matthew's gospel in order to sandwich in these clearly fictitious verses. Jesus very wisely does not appear to have ever contemplated founding a church of any kind, since he spent nearly twenty years preparing for his ministry, and was three years actively engaged in propagating his teaching, without giving the slightest indication of any such intention; on the contrary he never lost an opportunity of declaring his hatred and contempt for ecclesiasticism in every shape and form. Further this shrewd teacher, who cautioned his simple disciples on no account to preach anything but exactly what he taught (Matt. 10. 24, 25, 27), would never have been so imprudent as to trust the rash and ignorant Peter to such an extent, while on the other hand the whole passage is exactly what one would

expect an arrogant and unscrupulous Church scribe to insert. Again it is surely inconceivable that Peter when dictating his narrative to Mark should have entirely omitted to mention, this altogether unprecedented honour conferred on himself, if only to offset the duly recorded severe rebuke which he received on this occasion (Mark 8. 33). And is it credible that Jesus Christ entrusted the keys of the kingdom of heaven to one whom he addresses immediately afterwards as "Satan", describing him as "a stumbling block", and declaring that he—like so many of his reputed successors—"minded not the things of God, but the things of men" (Matt. 16. 23)? Moreover this ascription of special honours to Peter is incompatible with several other passages in this gospel, as shown by this sequence in chapter 14. 33, the disciples are credited with having made exactly the same declaration which in chapter 16 gained Peter his reputed pre-eminence; in spite of this alleged decision in Peter's favour we find them, in chapter 18. 1, still asking, "who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" while further on, in chapter 19. 27, Peter himself is actually described as enquiring what reward shall he and the other disciples have, and in the reply they are all promised indiscriminately, even including apparently Judas Iscariot, that they "shall sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel". And lastly it will be shown later (p. 167) that Peter never assumed, nor was ever accorded, any such special pre-eminence amongst the apostles. Even if these extraneous verses were genuine this would prove that the two earlier gospels, which omit them, could not have been divinely revealed, else they would not have been left so incomplete: the above considerations, however, leave no doubt that this interpolation in Matthew's gospel was fabricated (p. 92) with the express purpose of giving apparent support to the church's unwarranted usurpation of authority to pick and alter the scriptures at will, and then declare the result to be "divinely revealed".

In view of numerous such mischievous adaptations of early writings to cover ecclesiastical errors and spurious sacraments (see last chapter), it is not surprising that Bishop Papias should have preferred, as he says, to "enquire from the followers of the first presbyters what these had said, for I thought I could not derive as much advantage from books as from the living and abiding oral tradition", implying thus that all the writings extant in his day were very inaccurate and unreliable, though they form the basis on which the present gospels were founded. It is strange that Papias makes no mention of Luke's gospel, and stranger still that, though he is stated, by Irenæus to have been a disciple of John, yet he seems to have had no knowledge of the gospel which bears John's name: this strongly confirms the evidence, to be adduced presently (p. 118 *et seq.*), that the fourth gospel was not written by John, and shows it was not accepted by the primitive Christian Church. We may conclude from all this that the biblical gospels

show no signs of having been divinely revealed, but merely represent what was approved by those who purposely developed Paul's false gospel of the sacrificed and deified Christ, worshipped by popular heathen ceremonies and sacraments, instead of fostering the true gospel of Jesus, with its pure spiritual communion, devoid of attractive temple ritual. Similarly the epistles of Paul, which for the same reason form the most prominent part of the remaining new Testament writings, are, notwithstanding their elevated spiritual tone, so imbued with the false doctrines enumerated at the end of the last chapter that they too cannot claim to have been divinely revealed.

All this biblical confusion raises numerous questions. Why for example did Jesus not employ more reliable agents to spread his truth? What would have happened if Jesus and Paul had met and exchanged their conflicting views on religion? Why, as a carpenter (Mark 6. 3), did not Jesus construct a printing press, and by this useful invention distribute his message accurately and widely? Why at least did he not write his gospel, give a copy to each of his disciples and then send them out to evangelize, thus allowing their educated hearers a fair chance to compare the imperfect utterances of these rough illiterate preachers with the true record of their enlightened teacher, and to recopy this, for consideration at their leisure and for further dissemination? It may be idle to dally with such speculations but we can very profitably conjecture what "the gospel of God" (Mark 3. 14) would have contained supposing Jesus *had* written what he preached, for if we could construct a thoroughly reliable statement of his truth from his own authentic material, this should certainly prevail against those ecclesiastical "traditions which have made void the word of God" (Matt. 15. 6), and have split all Christendom asunder. The attempt to construct such a "gospel of God" according to Jesus is in no way presumptuous, for, on the contrary, it is the plain duty of all honest seekers after religious truth to make sure that they are dealing, in this case, with what Jesus himself actually claimed to be divine truth, and not with some misrepresentation or false doctrine issued in his name: in order to ensure this we shall be guided by the following essential limitations in our search for "the truth as it is in Jesus". (t) Jesus stated that "God's word is truth" (John 17. 17), therefore everything that savours of error or falsehood must be excluded from this gospel by the most rigid application of the fourfold TRUE test. (r) Being the "gospel of God" all personal details concerning the truth-revealer, however interesting they may be, must be omitted and recorded elsewhere, because the messenger of truth, as Jesus acknowledged in his own case, has no claim to divinity apart from his all-important divine word (John 12. 44-50); more especially all the fairy tales surrounding his birth, life and death, all miracles, superstitions, sorceries, and in fact everything in any way irrational, can find no place in

this record of God's established order, inviolable will, and eternal truth. (u) The "gospel of God" according to Jesus thus becomes narrowed down to the records of his teaching, exactly as it ought to be, for Jesus distinctly stated at the outset that he came into the world specially to preach (Mark i. 38), and confirmed this in the closing scene by saying: "to this end have I been born that I should bear witness unto the truth" (John 18. 37)¹: this truth he was quite convinced he had heard from God (John 8. 40), this truth only would have been worthy of being embodied in his written "gospel of God", and such divine truth alone deserves universal acceptance. (e) The "gospel of God", preached or written by Jesus during his lifetime, could not possibly have contained anything relating to Pauline Christianity which was founded on miracles associated with Christ's death (1 Cor. 15. 14, 17), so that the pure teaching of Jesus is entirely free from all those debasing errors connected with the idolatrous worship of a man-god, and replaces such paganism by the exalting worship of God the Spirit, in spirit and in truth.

Reasoning strictly along the above lines *the "gospel of God" preached by Jesus may be said to be limited to what is TRUE in his discourses recorded chiefly in the two gospels bearing the names of Matthew and John*, and to other scattered authentic sayings of Jesus agreeing therewith: the remaining portions of the four gospels—being concerned for the most part with more or less credible details of Christ's life, with innumerable ambiguous parables, Messianic claims, and so forth—must be rejected for our present purpose, because, whether regarded as true or not, they certainly do not represent the pure teaching of Jesus concerning God.

(T) Turning then to the first discourse in the gospel of Matthew, it is at once seen to fulfil all the above required conditions: we have already produced the certificate of Bishop Papias that Matthew did actually write down the discourses of Jesus; we have the statement of Jesus himself at the end of the sermon (Matt. 7. 24), guaranteeing "these words of mine" to be a bed rock of truth, on which it is safe and wise to build—so different to the personal "Rock" on which the newly-proclaimed Christ is falsely represented as founding his much divided Church (p. 106)—and it bears its own credentials with it, for when we read it we

¹ These two definite pronouncements should be compared with Mark 10. 45, "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister," which is obviously the correct conclusion of this passage, to this, however, is added the quite superfluous phrase "and to give his life a ransom for many", although there had been no talk of sin, and nothing to suggest the idea of a ransom. These words being so strikingly irrelevant, combined with the fact that Jesus omitted any such reference in the other two declarations of his purpose in life, strongly indicate that the statement, "and to give his life a ransom for many", was a subsequent insertion: the close resemblance between this expression and the Pauline interpolation "this is my blood of the covenant, which is shed for many" (Chap. 14. 24) further suggests the view that Paul inserted both those sentences in the original copy of Mark from which Luke was transcribing under his direction (p. 86).

involuntarily repeat the saying of the high priest's assembly though with a widely different meaning, "What further need have we of witnesses? for we ourselves have heard from his own mouth" (Luke 22. 71). It pictures a perfectly reasonable Creator controlling creation in a most rational manner; it abolishes ritual and is free from the usual causes of ecclesiastical controversy, so is universally acceptable; and it presents an exalting conception of man's relation to God and his fellow creatures, based on love and free forgiveness of sin and the doing of God's will, instead of the debasing Pauline and Christian doctrine of a cruel god appeased only by sacrificial atonement.

It is therefore in the main TRUE, and even the ignorant peasantry who were privileged to hear it recognized the fact that it was different from orthodox ecclesiastical teaching (Matt. 7. 29), as it is to this day. Jesus had no need of church bells to call the "great multitudes" who flocked to hear him from near and far; he did not summon them to any consecrated building—his church was the open sky-roofed country, his pulpit a hillside, his theme the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. He did not don any special robes to receive these hungry souls, nor did he greet his "dearly beloved brethren" by straightway telling them "to acknowledge and confess their manifold sins and wickedness" after which he would grant them absolution. On the contrary, the first words that came welling up to his lips out of the abundance of his heart were the words of blessing repeated over and over again as if he were loath to pass on to other subjects. There were no prayers except his own simple one—given by request (Luke 11. 1)—no creed, no collect, no interminable litanies, no psalms, no hymns, no choir, no organ; although four of the "offertory sentences" were here used for the first time, yet Judas was not permitted to circulate with his bag, for Jesus was interested in souls, not shekels. A barren service truly from the Church's point of view, devoid of everything which it considers requisite, and yet was there in reality any essential lacking, was ever congregation so richly entertained? There was no need for Jesus to repeat *that* service at weekly intervals or ever again; *his* prayer, *his* precepts, *his* blessings are indeed likely to endure "as long as the heart has passions, as long as life has woes". For in this, his maiden recorded discourse, the young and ardent teacher endeavoured to gather all the spiritual fruits which had matured during previous ages, and to express therefrom "pure religion and undefiled before our God and Father"; the product, flavoured with his own interpretations, and sweetened with his own overflowing sympathy and compassion, he then offered as a refreshing draught for the weary and heavy laden, as a cure for all social evils, and as a soothing balm for "the healing of the nations" throughout all time.

(R) Having presented his religious doctrines in perfectly TRUE form, the rational sequel was to ensure their dissemination

unaltered, and this Jesus attempted by a second discourse (Matt. 10) consisting of "commands" (Chap. 11. 1) to his disciples before sending them forth to spread abroad his truth. They were directed to make no additions to their ordinary attire and to accept food and lodging only,¹ getting no money, but preaching freely concerning "the kingdom of heaven". Jesus cautioned them against being presumptuous, "a disciple is not above his master nor a servant above his lord", and he warned them particularly to limit their instruction to his own words, "*what I tell you in the darkness speak ye in the light, and what ye hear in the ear proclaim upon the housetops*". It is a significant fact that this homely charge to his disciples when entering on their ministry is carefully omitted from the Church's elaborate ordination services, evidently because the contrast between their respective ideals would have been too glaring. The first requirement of the Church is that its candidates be "decently habited", and the first question it asks about them is "are they apt and meet for their learning and godly conversation to exercise their ministry duly to the honour of God and the edifying of his Church?" so apparently the Church would have had to reject the chosen roughly-clad disciples of Jesus, for after their three years training they were pronounced "unlearned and ignorant" by the Jewish priesthood (Acts 4. 13).

Further this whole Church service consists in those who propose to make "a living of the gospel" (1 Cor. 9. 14), binding on themselves and agreeing to teach others, "the doctrines and sacraments and the discipline of Christ as the Lord hath commanded and as this Church and realm hath received the same", all which have no place in the pure, simple, "gospel of God" preached by Jesus, but are merely as he called them "grievous burdens" imposed by the Christ-worshipping Church. Thus the plain straightforward statement of Jesus, "Speak what I tell you", is perverted by the Church into a cumbersome double-barrelled ordination question, the two parts of which furnish a very suggestive explanation of the Church's worst errors past and present. In the first place the bishop asks the candidate for priesthood, "Are you persuaded that the holy scriptures contain sufficiently all doctrine required of necessity for eternal salvation *through faith in Jesus Christ?*" The special point to note here is that at the time Jesus first sent forth his apostles this Church doctrine of "eternal salvation through faith in Jesus Christ" was quite unknown, for it certainly is not contained in the Old Testament scriptures, and the New Testament was not in existence, nor had Jesus taught it by word of mouth, for he had not yet assumed the rôle and title of "Christ"; in fact, reference to his recorded sermon on the mount discloses his positive statement that eternal salvation, or what Jesus calls "entry into the kingdom of heaven", is to be obtained "Not by saying 'Lord,

¹ The word "hire" used in Matthew 10. 10 (A.V.) is correctly translated "food" in the R V as well as in the French and German Bibles.

Lord,' but by doing the will of the heavenly Father" (Matt. 7. 21)—in other words *not* "through faith in Jesus Christ", as maintained by the Church. Surely every rational Christian can see that Jesus must have preached, and have thus taught his disciples, "all doctrines required of necessity for eternal salvation", before sending them out to preach; therefore these essentials are to be sought in the account of what Jesus taught up to the time that he considered his disciples fit to repeat his preaching, they are to be sought in what he definitely commanded them to preach (Matt. 10. 7), that is to say they are to be sought, *and can be found*, in the true gospel of the kingdom of heaven, set forth in the sermon on the mount, in which Christ's name does not even occur. On the other hand these essentials of salvation are most assuredly not to be found in the remaining very unreliable scriptural accounts of incredible miracles, erroneous doctrines, spurious sacraments, and false prophecies all connected with Christ's life and death, and forming the Christian faith, which the superstitious Paul "persuaded" himself and the early Church to adopt and to fasten upon Christendom ever since, formerly by persecution, but now chiefly by perverting the minds of children.

The second part of the bishop's ordination question throws an unintentional flood of light on this subject. "Are you determined", he continues, "out of the said scriptures to instruct the people committed to your charge, and to teach nothing as required of necessity to eternal salvation, but *that which you shall be persuaded may be concluded and proved by the scripture?*" Paul was the first to persuade himself (Rom. 8. 38) and others (2 Cor. 5. 10, 11) falsely that his gospel (1 Cor. 15. 1, etc.) concerning Christ's death as the atonement of "the new covenant" (p. 82), being ratified by his supposed resurrection from the dead (pp. 138, 9), and consequent deification (Acts 17. 31), could all be "proved by the scriptures" (Acts 17. 2, 3), and since then the records of the ever-warring Christolatrous Churches, particularly those of the papacy, show that there is no limit to the errors which the ecclesiastical mind can "persuade itself may be concluded and proved by the scriptures". The world would have escaped the abundant evil fruits of these errors, if Paul, instead of founding the Christian Church on the shifting sands of his Christolatrous heresies, had "heard the words of Jesus and done them" (Matt. 7. 26).

Whatever is TRUE in the sermon on the mount is, then, considered here to be the pure teaching of Jesus, and can be used as a standard of his religious truth, so that what does not agree therewith may be regarded as false or superfluous. When therefore, shortly after its delivery Christ is not only represented as beginning to perform miracles contrary to his own teaching, but also as conferring this power on his disciples, instructing them (Matt. 10. 8) to do "mighty works", such as to raise the dead, and to cast out devils, which he had expressly condemned as "working iniquity",

then this is a clear indication of the change that gradually transformed the truth-revealing teacher, Jesus, who refused to perform any special sign, into the usurper of divinity, the miracle worker, the man-god Christ. This transformation is so accurately reflected in the three remaining discourses related in the gospel—each terminated by the expression “when Jesus had ended these words”—that they must be excluded from the true “gospel of God” preached by Jesus, as a little consideration will show.

The first of these later discourses ends at chapter 13. 53, and the second at chapter 19. 1, and it is evident that “the words” in both these cases consisted of parables; indeed it is stated in chapter 13. 34, “all these things spake Jesus in parables unto the multitude and without a parable spake he nothing unto them”, and in the next verse the narrator attributes this to Old Testament prophecy. When the puzzled disciples naturally asked the reason for this unusual course, Christ gave the utterly unsatisfactory reply (Matt. 13. 10, 11), “Unto you it is given to know the *mysteries* of the kingdom of heaven, but unto them it is not given . . . therefore speak I to them in parables because seeing they see not, and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand”, as stated by the prophet Isaiah.¹ This answer was simply an admission that the parable teaching was an artificial pose, adopted to conform with a vague Old Testament reference interpreted as relating to an imaginary Christ, whom Jesus was gradually learning to personate (John 5. 39). All this was sheer ecclesiasticism, opposed in every way to the true “gospel of God” taught by Jesus. (t) His own word, “mysteries”, goes straight to the root of the evil; there was no mystery about the first true teaching of the kingdom of heaven by Jesus, which as he said was so simple that it was “revealed unto babes” (Matt. 12. 25). (r) To teach purposely in such a manner that the hearers cannot detect the hidden meaning, and yet to threaten them for not understanding, is quite irrational, and was certainly not the attitude of Jesus towards the other multitudes who heard his first discourse, but reminds us rather of the god who first hardened Pharaoh’s heart and then punished him for acting accordingly: this may have been Jehovah’s method as indicated by the prophecy which Christ quoted in support of his cryptic utterances, but the heavenly Father of all, depicted by Jesus,

¹ It is quite possible that Jesus Christ never made any such reply, as the above passage is copied from Mark (Chap. 4. 10 to 13), in which the enclosing verses 10 and 13 flow smoothly together without it, as follows: “the twelve asked him of the parable . . . And he said unto them, ‘Know ye not this parable?’ and how then will ye know all parables?” his full interpretation then following quite naturally. The superfluous verses 11 and 12 have thus all the appearance of an interpolation—clumsily introduced with a repetition of the words “and he said unto them”—probably by Paul with a view to support his alien doctrine of predestination set forth in his epistle to the Romans where (Chap. 11. 8) he actually quotes this very passage from Isaiah (see p. 86, also footnote p. 109).

is incapable of such unreasonableness. (u) The concealment of divine truth in occult sayings or parables, and its revelation only to the priestly castes and their followers, has always been the very life-blood of ecclesiasticism, priestcraft and sorcery, but such exclusive restriction of divine favour to any chosen people, church, or caste finds no place in the teaching of him who laid down the universal precept that the kingdom of heaven is, ever and always, freely open to all who "do the will of the Father which is in heaven", without any priestly mediation either here or in heaven. (e) There is nothing elevating or enlightening in this symbolic method of teaching as shown by its effect on the disciples, who, in spite of receiving special explanations, remained to the end as ignorant as orthodox Christians of what Jesus really meant by the kingdom of heaven (Acts. 17:23): as parables are merely illustrations, usually ambiguous and often misleading, no real loss of truth is incurred by rejecting them from the true "gospel of God".

The last discourse in Matthew ends with the usual closing statement in chapter 26. 1, but in this case "the words" that were finished were prophecies and parables concerning the second advent and last judgment, "when the Son of man shall come in his glory and all the angels with him . . . then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world' . . . then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, 'Depart from me, ye cursed, into the eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels' . . . And these shall go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.'" (Matt. 25. 31-46). This is orthodox Christianity taught by the Christian Churches to every child they can lay their hands on, thus deliberately casting a dark shadow of fear of death, and of bondage to the Church, over superstitious believers for the rest of their lives. This prophecy concerning Christ as arbiter of heaven and hell quite naturally accounts for ecclesiastical Christolatry, which is opposed in every way to the true "gospel of God"—the prophecy therefore cannot be TRUE. (t) It is proved to be false since it was not fulfilled at the accurately appointed time: it begins with the words (Matt. 24. 15), "When therefore ye see the abomination of desolation", which Luke (Chap. 21. 20) explains more precisely by beginning the selfsame prophecy thus, "*But when ye see Jerusalem compassed with armies*, then know that her desolation is at hand"; the destruction of Jerusalem is of course a well-known historical event, which took place in the year A.D. 70, so that probably many of Christ's hearers were amongst its victims. Matthew's description of the desolation continues (Chap. 24. 21), "*Then shall be great tribulation*, such as hath not been from the beginning of the world, no, nor ever shall be", and further (vs. 29, 30), "*But immediately after the tribulation of those days . . . they shall see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven*", etc., and finally, in verse 34,

Christ says: "Verily I say into you this generation shall not pass away till all these things be accomplished." The day and the hour were certainly not then known to anyone (v. 36), but if the above italicized parts of the description be correct and be read consecutively then *the exact year in which the prophecy ought to have been fulfilled, but was not, is known quite well*. Christ may have read correctly the signs of Judæa's impending downfall, but he erred grievously in imagining that this would be followed at once by his own second appearance under supernatural circumstances—a mistake which completely discredits both Christ as prophet, and the possibility of such an event ever coming true.

(r) Christ's definite prophecy that the second advent would take place "immediately after" the destruction of Jerusalem having proved fallacious, it follows rationally that the similar prophecy concerning the last judgment, which was to take place at the same time, is equally false, and can never be fulfilled. But there is another important reason for regarding this prophecy of the last judgment as being fictitious, and therefore not worthy of a place in the true "gospel of God". Several instances have been given, showing how the writer of what is called Matthew's gospel copied largely from Mark, but habitually introduced extraneous matter with the evident purpose of giving seeming support to errors of the early Church—and this is yet another such case. The earlier gospels of Mark and Luke both mention the second advent, but the previously quoted orthodox description of the last judgment is only recorded in Matthew, and as usual this inserted matter is quite superfluous except for the purpose of countenancing Church superstition. It should be noted that Matthew copies Mark's account of the second advent (Mark 13. 26, 27) almost word for word in his chapter 24. 30, 31, thus, "and they shall see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send forth his angels with a great sound of a trumpet and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds from one end of heaven to the other"—this terminates the incident in Mark, who brings the matter to a close with a few cautionary verses; Matthew does exactly the same, but then, after a couple of pages of parables, begins again abruptly in the same way, "when the Son of man shall come in his glory" (Matt. 25. 31), thus introducing a quite different version of the scene—what might be called the 'hell and eternal damnation version', very useful to the Church for its purposes, but wholly irrational and contrary to the "gospel of God".

(u) A belief in the ascension into heaven of a revived human body, and its subsequent reappearance on the clouds of heaven, was quite natural at a time when everyone seriously considered the earth as the centre of the universe, forming a stage on which the tragedy of human life was enacted before an assembly of personal gods, seated on heavenly thrones, attended by arch-angels and host of angels, all concealed by a star-spangled firmament,

which they occasionally pierced in order to come down and intervene in human affairs. This is in fact what a very considerable portion even of adult civilized human beings at the present day think about the world they live in, and the teaching of the Church is responsible for perpetuating these antiquated superstitions; but even a slight knowledge of the main facts of astronomy, as sketched in Part I, should suffice to dispel this ignorance, and make men realize that any such scene as the second advent, described in the Bible, is simply a childish fairy tale, totally at variance with God's universal order and arrangement. (e) This crude conception of a heaven peopled with celestial beings presided over by a supreme God was common to the heathen nations generally, and it is interesting to trace its adoption by Christianity. As shown by the parables in the third and fourth discourses, Christ altered the whole character of his teaching in order to comply with what he conceived to be a scriptural prophecy concerning himself, for naturally when he assumed the title of Christ he had to act accordingly; exactly the same explanation accounts for the prophecies in the fifth and last of Matthew's recorded discourses, containing the debasing pagan ideas of Christ's relation to the heavenly host at the second advent and last judgment, the whole description being evidently prompted by two vague and superstitious Old Testament utterances as follows.

Christ's presence and position in heaven seem to have been determined for all time by the poetic expression in the opening verse of Psalm 110—where the writer flatters his patron, after the oriental custom, by attributing to him special divine favour—"The Lord saith unto my lord, 'sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool'," which was quoted by Christ for his own peculiar purpose (see p. 135). This confirmed the simple minded disciples in their expectation of sitting on thrones with him whenever he decided to "restore the kingdom to Israel" (Acts 1. 6), and so the text became indelibly fixed in the minds of both themselves and their converts. Peter cited it in his eloquent pentecostal address (Acts 2. 34); the first Christian martyr, Stephen, conjured up a vision of heaven according to this description (Acts 7. 55, 56), and the superstitious Paul of course adopted it eagerly, and gave it publicity in his epistles, in Romans (8. 34), in Ephesians (1. 20), in Colossians (3. 1), etc.; especially in writing to his fellow Hebrews this text from their scriptures is referred to in the third verse of the opening chapter, is quoted more fully in the thirteenth verse of the same chapter, is repeated again in chapter 10. 12, 13, and still once more in chapter 12. 2. Naturally too when the early Church scribes became aware that there was no satisfactory reference to the ascension into heaven in the early gospels, they added the admittedly spurious ending to Mark (pp. 142-3) in order to support the by then orthodox doctrine that Christ was "received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God" (Mark

16. 19). Finally this statement was embodied in the Christian Church's official creed, and so all Christendom has been taught ever since to believe this myth, which is really nothing more than the poetic fancy of an ancient psalmist.

So too Christ's execution of judgment is simply a reproduction from the Old Testament mythology, as shown by comparing Matthew's account of the last judgment with the following very similar quotations. In Daniel 7. 9, 13, 14, we read, "I beheld till thrones were placed and one that was ancient of days did sit . . . his throne was fiery flames . . . and behold there came with the clouds of heaven one like unto a son of man . . . and there was given him dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and languages should serve him . . . and his dominion shall not be destroyed." Christ evidently took his adopted title "Son of man" from this passage, since he asserted that "the Father gave him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of man" (John 5. 27); naturally therefore he is represented as the officiating judge at the resurrection scene depicted by Daniel (12. 1, 2): "there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that same time . . . and many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting contempt." In this case again Peter is declared to have been charged by the risen Christ "to testify that this is he which is ordained of God to be the judge of quick and dead" (Acts 10. 42); and again Paul repeats this same superstition in his Athenian address (Acts 17. 31), in his written description of the end of the world (1 Cor. 15. 24-28), and in his farewell to Timothy (2 Tim. 4. 1), and here once more the Church embodies the doctrine in its official creed and articles, according to which the Christ, after missing his own appointed time of re-appearance, has been sitting "body, flesh and bones" for nineteen centuries, waiting somewhere in the depths of space "until he return to judge" the countless millions of mortals who have lived on this insignificant fragment of the universe ever since it became habitable. *And this myth, which holds the majority of Christians in secret dread of death and the hereafter, when traced to its source, is admittedly nothing else but a nightmare "dream and vision of the head"* (Daniel 7. 1) attributed to a Babylonian captive sorcerer named Daniel, who, "had understanding in all visions and dreams . . . ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters that were in all the realm" (Daniel 1. 17, 20). The Bible could be increased to many times its present size by inserting the abundant examples of such fantastic fiction, which flooded the Jewish world in those excessively superstitious days, but these absurdities were for the most part rejected by the biblical compilers, and one can only wonder why any of this apocalyptic literature was officially accepted as divinely inspired (see p. 264). So prevalent were such ideas however that they seem even to have influenced the spiritual

mind of Jesus, as shown by his reference to the final judgment in the very passage in the sermon on the mount where he condemned such prophecies (Matt. 7. 22, 23): this apparent discrepancy is explained by Jesus himself in John 12. 47, 48. "I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me . . . hath one that judgeth him: the word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day." We may conclude then that the doctrines of Christ's personal reappearance in the clouds, followed by a general resurrection of the dead, and a last judgment with awards of eternal life and everlasting torture, are simply pagan mythology in no way TRUE, and therefore we are warranted in excluding Matthew's last recorded discourse from the "gospel of God" preached by Jesus.

(U) Next it is necessary to compare the standard "gospel of God"—limited to what is TRUE in the purest recorded teaching of Jesus in the first three gospels—with the discourses which form such a large part of the fourth gospel, in order to see whether they can be brought into conformity with each other; for it must be admitted that the first three gospels, with their wholly Jewish outlook, especially in their interpretation of Jesus Christ as the Messianic restorer of the kingdom to Israel, appear to have very little in common with the fourth gospel, where the Messianic dream is replaced by a spiritual view of the Christ as the living embodiment of those divine attributes, the exercise of which can transform erring human nature into that which is divine. The fourth gospel indeed begins on a note of occult spiritual truth, and is pervaded throughout by high-flown theology, while it seems to change the amiable idealist, Jesus, who charmed the multitude with his gracious sermon on the mount, into Christ the arrogant claimant of divinity, whose extreme egotism repelled his hearers, for we read "upon this many of his disciples went back and walked no more with him" (Chap. 6. 66): and yet in spite of all this when examined more closely it will be found to contain all the essentials of creed, code, and contempt for ceremonial which characterize the true religion preached by Jesus, only that these are now as it were filtered through a refined and educated brain with a markedly Grecian cast of thought.

It is a most interesting gospel to the truth-seeker, for it is more than any of the others the truth-revealing gospel when rightly interpreted, and the first essential to its correct understanding is to discard the orthodox idea that it was written by the "unlearned and ignorant" fishermen whose name it bears; we have indeed what amounts to John's own explicit statement that he did not write it, and very clear inferences to show who did. It begins with its writer's own representation of the universal Spirit as the creative "Word", which, when the full meaning of this Greek expression is realized (p. 233), shows him to have been not a Jehovah worshipping Jew,^d but a profoundly rational thinker, likely to be

approved by Jesus, and well fitted to become his beloved disciple. This evangelist speaks next of the incarnation of this Word, to which John the Baptist bore witness, and so he begins his narrative proper with a description of how two of John's truth-seeking disciples were referred by him to Jesus as the real truth-revealer. The writer of the fourth gospel alone mentions this incident because he is the only evangelist personally interested in it; he gives the name of one of these two truth seekers as Andrew, but he leaves it to be inferred that the other was himself, Philip, Andrew's inseparable friend and fellow-citizen¹. He notes, as only one personally interested would note, the exact hour when they encountered Jesus, he notes how they abode with him that day, and how Andrew brought his own brother Simon Peter who was at once accepted, but how Jesus seems to have hesitated about admitting Philip himself as a disciple. Why? One can suggest many reasons. Philip's name was Greek, meaning "a lover of horses", and his speech was Greek (Chap. 12. 20, 21), indicating Greek parentage and education—although he "was from Bethsaida of the city of Andrew and Peter" (Chap. 1. 44)—and the young preacher had strong Jewish prejudices (Chap. 4. 22). He may have feared the influence of Philip's philosophy on his own ideas, or he may have foreseen that Philip might not agree with the other Hebrew disciples, as indeed appears to have been the case, except with Andrew: thus he is scarcely mentioned in any of the first three gospels although it is evident from the fourth that he held a very prominent place on many occasions, for example at his calling, at the feeding of the five thousand (Chap. 6. 5-8), at the coming of the Greek enquirers (Chap. 12. 21, 22), and at his daring challenge to Jesus (Chap. 14. 8, 9), not to mention the special closing incidents, where he is always referred to as "the disciple whom Jesus loved". In spite of these events—the recording of which incidentally affords strong proof of Philip's authorship—the disciples apparently never acknowledged this Gentile as a full apostle, for when he left Jerusalem to preach in Samaria, the apostles actually sent Peter and John to lay hands on his Samaritan converts, because they maintained that Philip's baptism did not confer the gift of the Holy Ghost (Acts 8. 12-17).

Another reason that may have made him undesirable in the eyes of Jesus and his disciples was that he was a man of position and influence, as indicated by casual references in the fourth gospel, all proving that Philip, rather than the unlettered fisherman, John, was the writer of it. Thus he was apparently hand in glove with

¹ Compare Fielding Hall's *The World Soul*, Appendix I. This attractive writer's plea for Philip's authorship of the fourth gospel is marred by his stating wrongly that the name Philip means "beloved" and was only conferred on this disciple by Jesus, whereas the chief point is that Philip, as befits the writer of the Gospel, was a Greek, or at least more Greek than Jew.

Nicodemus, for whom no doubt he arranged the secret interview, full details of which he, and he alone, records (Chap. 3. 1, etc.), while from this same "ruler of the Jews" Philip obtained information regarding the plotting of the Pharisees (Chap. 7. 45-52), and was even acquainted with the proceedings of a special meeting of the council (Chap. 11. 47); further it is definitely stated that he "was known unto the high priest" into whose palace he had the free right of entry (Chap. 18. 15, 16), where the fact that he was a Greek saved him from persecution, but at the same time prevented his intervening on behalf of Jesus. There can be little doubt that Jesus, who was by no means favourably disposed either towards Gentiles or persons of high degree, weighed all the above considerations in his mind overnight, but, being a shrewd judge of character, he recognized Philip's genuine worth, and so we read, "On the morrow . . . he findeth Philip, and Jesus saith unto him 'Follow me'" (Chap. 1. 43): thus was enrolled the disciple most trusted and loved by Jesus, the disciple who leaned on his breast at the last supper, who stood by him at his mock trial by the chief priests and at his crucifixion, and to whom the sufferer confided the care of his mother at the last.

It was he who alone appreciated the highest spiritual teaching of Jesus, and recorded this truth in the fourth gospel as stated in the twenty-fourth verse of the last chapter, "This is the disciple which beareth witness of these things and wrote these things and we know that his witness is true:" this verse is usually considered to be an attestation either by John himself, or else by the elders of his Church at Ephesus, attributing the gospel to John, as the beloved disciple, but these elders had no personal knowledge of the events enabling them to be competent witnesses, and it certainly is not John testifying as regards himself, for this reason. The persons taking part in this closing incident are all referred to in the second verse of this last chapter, and they include "the sons of Zebedee and two other of his disciples"; now as John was well known to be one of the sons of Zebedee, he obviously cannot be "the disciple Jesus loved", mentioned later, whose identity had for some reason to be concealed under this ambiguous description. The only natural inference is that one of the two others unnamed was the beloved disciple—certified here to be the real writer of the gospel, and shown above to be Philip—while we may surely also conclude that the second was Philip's bosom friend, Andrew, invariably present wherever his brother Simon Peter and Philip were (p. 141). Further the witness who certified that "the beloved disciple wrote these things" is now seen to be none other than the reputed author of the gospel, John, the son of Zebedee, an acknowledged eyewitness, such as alone could "know that his witness was true": to make the explanation quite clear we might cite the attestation thus, "This (disciple whom Jesus loved, namely Philip) is the disciple which beareth witness of these things and wrote these

things (fourth gospel), and we (John) know that his (Philip's) witness is true".¹

And the reason for this attestation by John can be inferred from verse 23: the incident described in this last chapter had naturally given rise to the superstition that the beloved "disciple should not die", and when this in due course was proved false by the death of Philip, it then became necessary for John—who was probably the only survivor of the eyewitnesses mentioned in verse 2—to explain exactly how the error arose, and to certify that the whole record was true; at the same time he reveals sufficiently the identity of the deceased author, taking care however not to accentuate the Gentile origin of the gospel by associating it with its writer's Greek name, but by tactfully recalling Philip's descriptive title he highly commends it as the genuine work of "the disciple whom Jesus loved", thus removing all doubts or prejudices concerning it. The mere fact of John in his old age having to write such an attestation confirms the conclusion, already drawn from the silence of Bishop Papias in regard to this gospel (p. 107), that it was not approved or considered authentic during the century or so following Christ's death. Fielding Hall (*op. cit.* p. 301), says, "Philip seems to have made a Church of his own among educated men and to have left his gospel to them. It does not seem to have been published till long after the Synoptics, 200 years A.D. or thereabouts, having been kept as an inner doctrine of an esoteric brotherhood. The time was not ripe for it to be understood". This would certainly explain there being no reference to this gospel in the writings of the early Christian Church until towards the end of the second century, by which time it had become wrongly attributed to John, and several interpolations had been inserted with a view to render it more orthodox—these two factors at once making it acceptable. That John knew this gospel well is proved not only by his above-quoted attestation, but also by its marked influence on his first epistle, which is so striking as to suggest the accepted idea that they were written by the same person.

If all this be correct it follows first that this fourth gospel was originally a true record—since the apostle John certified it to be the true witness of the disciple most intimately associated with Jesus—and, in the next place, Philip's authorship is sufficient guarantee of its being a reasonable unprejudiced statement concerning the purely spiritual teaching of Jesus; it remains therefore to complete the proof of its being TRUE, by showing that its many discourses attributed to Jesus are, in the main, universally acceptable, as well as being of an exceptionally exalting character. In order to do this their real meaning must be defined, for owing partly to

¹ John here uses the plural "we" as he frequently does in his epistles, but in the next final verse he employs the singular "I", which indicates that this last evidently supplementary part of the gospel could not have been written by the Ephesian elders.

Christ's apparent self-glorification through ambiguous speech, and partly to misleading interpolations—some of which will be noted as we proceed (see pp. 122, 127, 141 (footnote), 146)—their real spiritual significance is usually misconstrued into a debasing pagan deification of Christ's person, entirely at variance with the true "gospel of God" preached by Jesus. This statement appears to be well illustrated by the verse (Chap. 20. 31) professing to describe the purpose of the gospel "But these are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye may have life in his name." The narrative was apparently brought to its natural conclusion with the previous verse, "Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of the disciples which are not written in this book." In this the last chapter was added subsequently, containing John's explanatory testimony and concluding with the final verse, which was obviously meant to imitate the last verse (Chap. 20. 30) of the gospel proper. From this it seems probable that the above verse (Chap. 20. 31) was not in the original gospel, but was inserted by some Christ-worshipping commentator: most certainly it neither represents the true spiritual message pervading all this gospel, nor is it a doctrine to be found in the pure teaching of Jesus regarding the kingdom of heaven which he instructed his apostles to preach.

This deification of a person, this worship of a hero or semi-human god, is the fundamental error which we have found underlying paganism, and, being the most popular form of idolatry, it has been adopted by practically all ecclesiastical organizations which trade in superstition, and is therefore the essence of Christianity; these considerations should make us very, very cautious about accepting any such statements regarding the divinity of Jesus, even when they are reported on apparently unimpeachable authority as having been spoken by himself. The simple explanation in most of these instances in this gospel is, *Jesus was so profoundly impressed with his divine word of truth that he completely identified himself with it*; he repeatedly thinks and speaks of his message as if his own person consisted of nothing else; his whole being was so imbued with this God-begotten truth, that, as the Jews said, he "called God his own Father, making himself equal with God" (Chap. 5. 18); he even went further—"Have I been so long time with you, and dost thou not know me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father, how sayest thou 'Shew us the Father'? Believest thou not that I am in the Father and the Father in me?" (Chap. 14. 9, 10). But this intimate union with the heavenly Father was exactly what Jesus taught in the sermon on the mount, when he said that his followers would be perfect as their heavenly Father by doing his will and especially by observing his law of divine love; and in this fourth gospel Jesus claims to have proved the truth of his message by actually achieving this spiritual union through "doing always the things that are pleasing to God" (Chap. 8. 2).

Usually wherever Jesus seems to claim personal divinity there is either some mistake in the record, or else he is speaking about this purely spiritual union which is common to all who fulfil the conditions of his divine message. If he asserts he is "the light of the world" yet the true light "lighteth every man coming into the world" (Chap. 1. 9). If he calls himself "Son of God" yet all who follow his example have "the right to become children of God" (Chap. 1. 12). If he claims that God gives him authority to execute judgment yet he repeatedly states "I judge no man", for it is the word he received from God which "shall judge those who reject it in the last day" (Chap. 12. 48, 49). He does indeed offer eternal life to those who believe in him, as the commentator notes in the above-quoted interpolation (Chap. 20. 31), but Jesus definitely stated "he that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me" (Chap. 12. 44), and on page 131 may be found *three most convincing examples, all taken from this gospel, in which he actually repudiated those who "believed that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God", impressing on them that eternal life can only be obtained by spiritual union with God, resulting from doing God's word.*

Jesus seems to have deliberately puzzled and exasperated the Jews by his figures of speech and ambiguous statements, as for example in the synagogue at Capernaum (Chap. 6), where he reiterated over and over again the stumbling block statement (vs. 60, 61), concerning "eating his flesh and drinking his blood" as the source of eternal life, but he began this very discourse by explaining to them "the bread of God is that which cometh down out of heaven and giveth life unto the world" (v. 33), which of course could only apply to God's all-creative word containing his divine message of truth (Chap. 17. 7), and certainly not to the flesh and blood of the earth-born agent who "bore witness of this truth" (Chap. 18. 37). *Remembering that the writer of this gospel represents God's Word as being "made flesh" (Chap. 1. 14), his real spiritual meaning becomes quite clear if we simply substitute this expression "God's word" for the personal factor in all such obscure references: thus, not "I am", but, "God's word is the bread of life" (Chap. 6. 33, 35, 48, 51), "God's word is the light of the world" (Chap. 8. 12), "God's word is the way, the truth, and the life" (Chap. 14. 6), etc. So too consider the "hard sayings" in the sixth chapter which so naturally disgusted the Jews and even his followers: "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood ye have not life in yourselves. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life . . . He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood abideth in me and I in him" (vs. 53-56): Christ's own recorded explanation of this is, "the words that I have spoken unto you are spirit and are life" (v. 63), so they must be read in some such spiritual manner as this: "Except ye partake of God's word and imbibe his truth ye have not life in yourselves. He that partaketh of God's*

word and imbibeth his truth hath eternal life. . . . He that partaketh of God's word and imbibeth his truth abideth in God and God in him." We may, then, claim the authority of Jesus for reading all his words as "spirit that quickeneth" not as even crucified "flesh which profiteth nothing" (v. 63), and so we are justified in asserting that the true "gospel of God" is not a record written "that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God and that believing yet may have life in his name" (p. 145), but is simply the spiritual teaching of Jesus proclaiming that "God's word is truth" and that this divine truth reveals "the only true God whom to know is life eternal".

The Jews, failing entirely to grasp the spiritual meaning of these ecstatic utterances, interpreted all such references in their literal, personal sense, and naturally concluded that Jesus was mad (Chap. 10. 20), a blasphemer (Chap. 10. 33), and a dangerous revolutionary (Chap. 11. 48), so they persecuted and eventually crucified him. His own disciples were obviously incapable of understanding such high-flown spiritual allusions: they were simply attracted by his Messianic personation (John 1. 41), consequently when his person was seized, they at once forsook him and fled. Paul, who had no opportunity of hearing this spiritual teacher, is chiefly responsible for deifying Christ and inaugurating the worship of his person, seated on a heavenly throne, and Christendom, preferring this form of idolatry, has based its creed on the legend of Christ's miraculous birth and other superstitions associated with his death, so that the true spiritual "gospel of God" preached by Jesus during his lifetime is well nigh universally rejected.

We shall close this section with a reference to an incident recorded only in this gospel, which illustrates so many of the points under consideration that it deserves special mention. In the fourth chapter is a detailed account of a long conversation between a Samaritan woman and Jesus alone, his disciples having "gone away into the city to buy food" (v. 8): on their return, we read, they dared not ask him what he had been saying to her, and, as "the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans" (v. 9), they were not likely to question the woman. Philip, however, being a Gentile, would have had no such scruples, and even if he did not get the details of the conversation during that brief visit of two days, he had abundant opportunity to do so later, when he returned as a missionary to Samaria (Acts 8. 59), and would naturally have found these old converts and discussed the matter with them fully; this appears to furnish another strong indirect proof that Philip—not John—was the real author of this gospel. But the subject of the conversation is of far more importance, the chief point that concerns us here being to note how this discourse by Jesus agrees with his true "gospel of God", in its creed, code and rejection of ceremonial: (1) Thus God being here described as Spirit suggests the God whose "will must be done on earth as it is in heaven"—the

omnipresent God of the entire universe ; (2) He is the same Father God implying, as in the sermon on the mount, that he is a God of love towards his creatures, and expects them to be imbued with the same spiritual law of love in their dealings with him and with each other ; and (3) He is to be worshipped not by any priestly ritual in special consecrated places, not by "vain repetitions of long prayers" but in the solitude of the inner chamber, "in spirit and in truth".

The conversation having thus attained its wonderful climax in the definition of God as the universal Spirit to be worshipped directly in spirit (v. 24) without any intervening agent, it is, to say the least, very strange to find this followed immediately by Christ's apparently definite statement that he himself is the Messiah, "the mediator of the new-covenant" according to Paul (Heb. 12. 24), "our advocate with the Father", as John calls him (1 John 2. 1) : "the woman saith unto him 'I know that Messiah cometh (which is called Christ)' . . . Jesus saith unto her 'I that speak unto thee am he'" (vs. 25, 26). Would an ignorant more or less heathen peasant woman be likely to know or to mention the Greek synonym for the Messiah, particularly when talking to a religious teacher whom she had recognized to be a Jew? Surely the words attributed to her must be Philip's, more especially as he makes Andrew use the same very unlikely explanatory expression when speaking to his own brother Simon (Chap. 1. 41) : but if these words ascribed to the woman are not reliable then the declaration of Messiahship which they evoked cannot be accepted as genuine. Whether this be so or not, the main part of this conversation can on no account be omitted from the true "gospel of God" since, as we have seen, it agrees completely therewith, while its closing words (v. 24), when coupled with their natural sequel, as described in the next section (p. 127), will be found to form the most perfect expression of God's word of universal truth—religious, scientific, and philosophic—thus constituting the TRUE religion we are seeking ; —"God is spirit and they that worship him must worship in spirit and in truth."

(E) It might naturally be expected that such a spiritually-minded teacher as Jesus, after receiving secret information that the chief priests had already paid Judas his blood money (Matt. 24. 16-16), would arrange to leave some peculiarly exalting parting message behind him, and as an actual fact there are two entirely different prayers recorded as the last words uttered by him before the priests seized their victim : there can be no doubt which of these is the more worthy to be inserted in the true "gospel of God" as the teacher's final communion with God before his betrayal. Although the prayer during the agony in the garden of Gethsemane reported by the first three evangelists is so well known, yet the obvious fact that it must be wholly fictitious is completely overlooked ; its record is specially designed to excite perfervid

superstitious sentiment, and this prevents the Christian seeing how derogatory it really is, for surely there is no reason to suppose that Jesus would be distraught with self-centred craven fear of death, while to make him display such intense repugnance to the ordeal serves to increase the irrational cruelty of the deity who is represented as enforcing this unwilling sacrifice—a conception of God that is of course altogether opposed to the true teaching of Jesus concerning the heavenly Father.

Putting religious sentiment aside, however, common sense at once reveals how unreliable is this story. Its essential details are as follows: late at night Jesus went with his disciples into a garden and, wishing to pray alone, he told them to wait by themselves while he went “about a stone’s cast” further, so that he would be quite concealed by the darkness, as well as, no doubt, by the intervening trees and thickly growing shrubs of this oriental garden. In spite of being thus purposely out of sight and hearing, a full report of all Christ’s doings and sayings is furnished on what purports to be the authority of two of these disciples, namely Peter, as recorded by Mark—whose account is copied almost word for word by the compiler of Matthew—and Luke in his own gospel. These accounts are most circumstantial, relating how Jesus kneeled down and prayed, giving the exact words he is supposed to have used, even noting that in his agitation his sweat became as it were great drops of blood, and as an additional superstitious item, declaring that an angel from heaven appeared unto him. As if to frustrate any possible attempt to explain these details by actual observation, Christ is stated to have paid the disciples three separate visits, on each occasion finding them sound asleep, and reproaching them for not keeping watch, the chief narrator of the incident being specially addressed by name. To the Bible-worshipping Christian all this only proves that, what Christ was so anxious to conceal was afterwards miraculously revealed to the evangelists, but as miracles are excluded from the true “gospel of God”, the only alternative for the truth-seeker is to recognize that this dishonouring legend is merely superstitious fiction which must be rejected.

This conclusion is all the more desirable when we contrast with the above the genuine last prayer of Jesus uttered by him before going forth from the supper room: it occupies the whole of John 17, and its introduction includes the last five verses of the preceding chapter. Its dignified opening reference to his impending doom, “Father the hour is come, glorify now thy Son”, shows at once that this is no petition in his own interest, and that he has not the least idea of avoiding his fate, dismissing this, indeed, as a matter of no moment in view of his perfect spiritual union with God, which is the main thought pervading the whole discourse; even though he seems to speak of himself in practically every verse, yet, as throughout the whole gospel, he is really referring to his word of truth, the essence

of that divine unity which he prays with intense earnestness his disciples may share with him.

One such personal reference requires special explanation; "This is life eternal", he asserts in words of priceless value, "this is life eternal to know thee the only true God" (v. 3), and then, as often, some officious commentator seems to have spoiled the text by adding, "and him whom thou didst send even Jesus Christ". We cannot imagine Jesus making this formal mention of himself by his own name, giving his title and full description, either as it were to introduce himself to God or for the information of his disciples, but on the other hand this is exactly how an ardent Christ-worshipper would have described Jesus, and exactly what he would have added, thinking to repair an omission: surely "to know the only true God", the universal Spirit, the All in All, is final and complete, admitting of no addition, especially in view of the fact that the separate mention of Jesus Christ is so directly contrary to his insistent assertion all through this Chapter that he was "one with" this only true God even "before the world was" (v. 5).

This spiritual union had nothing to do with the person of Jesus Christ, but was simply God's word of truth completely filling the teacher's whole mind and inspiring his every word and action, making him "do always what is pleasing to the Father", and thus enabling him to identify himself completely with God: so, too, when he entreats that his followers may have this same union, he prays that they may be sanctified in exactly the same way: "Sanctify them in the truth; thy word is truth" (v. 17). This is just the inevitable sequel to the sublime definition of God as Spirit previously given by Jesus (Chap. 4. 14), for if God be Spirit, whose word is truth, and we have this divine word of truth flooding our minds, and directing our whole lives as Jesus had, then, and then only, we too "worship God in spirit and in truth", we commune with him, we are "one with" him, we *know* God, and "this is life eternal to know thee the only true God". What a wondrous farewell message, even though its full significance is not complete till we learn later what Spirit really is, and what "God's word" actually means!—There was no attempt to conceal these words; they were uttered in a room in presence of all the apostles who certainly were not asleep then, their recorder was in fact reclining on the breast of the speaker and they were surely intended for all truth-seekers for all time. No more fitting and exalting end could possibly be given to the "gospel of God" preached by Jesus, for he himself certified, "these things have I spoken unto you, that in 'God's word' ye may have peace" (Chap. 16. 33), "these things I speak in the world that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves" (Chap. 17. 13). *This is the incomparable treasure we have sought and found—nothing less than the true secret of life eternal, of peace and joy everlasting.*

RATIONAL

Having thus extracted what Jesus himself regarded as his divinely revealed word, and having indicated on this reliable authority the difference between the true "gospel of God" preached by him, and the false worship of the miracle-working Christ, it must next be shown how completely Christendom has been misled into adopting this irrational error from the very start. Consider the significance of the last prayer of Jesus from this point of view. The disciples had been chosen by Jesus himself, had been taught by him, and were most intimately associated with him during his three years' ministry; they had repeated his doctrine, professed to believe firmly that he "came forth from God" (John 16. 30), and were even certified by Jesus in his last message "to have kept God's word; now they know that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are from thee" (John 17. 6, 7)—yet notwithstanding all this Jesus knew well that these Christ-worshippers had no real spiritual union with the only true God, and so he prays with the most fervent earnestness that they may attain this all essential condition. Both the need for this prayer and its immediate sequel may well cause all Christ-worshippers furiously to think, for within a few hours after it was uttered these disciples betrayed, denied, and forsook their teacher. Moreover, when he was no longer with them, the biblical record shows that, under the skilled direction of a born and bred Pharisee, they established an ecclesiastical system on the Jewish pattern—so vehemently condemned by Jesus—with a Christolatrous creed, Jehovistic code, and heathen ceremonial, all opposed in every essential respect to the purely spiritual "gospel of God" which Jesus taught them during his lifetime. It is a very significant fact that with one exception all these Christ-worshipping deserters had been trained from infancy in the Jewish ritual, against which not even the prolonged teaching of Jesus, nor his passionate prayer, could prevail: as in the case of the ten cleansed lepers, the solitary trustworthy disciple, who gave glory to God by appreciating and recording this last spiritual appeal, was a stranger, the Greek philosopher Philip, considered by the other disciples unfit to confer the gift of the Spirit (Acts 8. 14-17). The pharisaic Christian Church, so founded, continues its self-righteous career to this day, divided into fiercely contending sects, deifying its human idol by its cult of superstitious legends and miracles, and offering eternal salvation through priestly rites and sacraments, as illustrated by what follows.

Not long after the termination of the war the present writer met an Anglo-Catholic bishop on board a small coasting steamer in the far East, where we had the little deck all to ourselves after dinner one evening. After some desultory conversation the bishop introduced the question of religion, and in explaining why I had

long since rejected Christianity I made a few Bible references, which to my great surprise elicited the impatient remark: "I wish you would not keep on quoting that book." When I protested that the Bible was the Christian Magna Charta which was supposed to settle all vexed questions of religion, the bishop retorted sharply: "It is nothing of the kind; it is full of errors from cover to cover," and added that he "*attached little importance to the teaching of Jesus as it was quite unsuited to modern conditions of life*".¹ Asked what he adopted in place of this teaching he at once replied: "the traditions and doctrines accepted and laid down officially by the Church, including of course the sacraments, as I am a great man for sacraments." I could not help saying: "Then it seems to me you worship the Church more than Jesus Christ." Half rising from his seat he declared very pompously: "Sir, I worship the Church which *IS* Christ." I was so taken aback by this notion of the much-divided Christian Church renouncing the teaching of Jesus, yet in the same breath identifying itself with the second person of the trinity, and being actually worshipped by its own members, that I could only ejaculate: "That is a mere formula:" as will be seen presently Jesus heaped curses on the Church of his day for just such rejection of his spiritual teaching, for the same strict adherence to ecclesiastical traditions and ordinances, and for devotion to similar temple rites and sacraments, but as there was no use citing his authority to this opponent, I did not press this matter further. Being however very anxious, if possible, to evoke some spark of spiritual truth from this representative of modern Christian ecclesiasticism, I asked him if he would kindly specify exactly what were these officially recognized Church doctrines on which he placed such reliance: looking greatly relieved at escaping from a very tight corner, he answered, exactly like a child repeating its catechism, ticking off the five points one by one on his fingers:

¹ This admission—taken like all the above details from my diary written at the time—interrupted my objection to Christianity, as not representing the ideals of life taught by Jesus, on the following grounds: (1) In regard to *secular life* Christianity has abandoned the simple communism Jesus and the apostles observed amongst themselves, and inculcated in the early Christian community (Acts 4 32 to 35). No doubt from a worldly point of view the Church may be wise and right in repudiating this officially in Art. 38 (C. E. Prayer Book), but undoubtedly also Jesus insisted that only those who carry out his words (Mark 10 21) can be his disciples and claim fellowship with God (pp 168, and 171-2) (2) In regard to *spiritual life*, the guiding principle taught by Jesus was the law of love, of which the whole history of Christendom is one long perpetual violation, as illustrated by its crusades, massacres, persecutions, Inquisition horrors, and endless strife culminating in the recent ghastly war and still more appalling preparation for wholesale mutual destruction being made by all the countries professing Christianity at the present day, and (3) as regards the *life celestial* this matter is discussed on pp 152, 153. The cause assigned for the whole of this discordance is indicated in the heading of the present chapter, for Christianity, as the name implies, represents the falsity of the Christhood that is contrary to the true teaching

"I believe in the miraculous birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, in his atonement on the cross, in his resurrection from the dead, in his ascension into heaven, and in his future coming to judge the world." That was all. Millions of souls the world over are hungry for "the bread of life", and Christianity offers them this stone in the name of Jesus Christ, and they accept it. I replied to this effect: "Jesus declared he came into the world to preach the truth which he heard from God, but in all the records of his discourses he never once claimed supernatural birth, and obviously he could not have referred to the myths connected with his death, therefore his divine truth is something very different from belief in the miracles, superstitions, and sacraments associated with his person, which the Church you worship has been trying to propagate for centuries." Greatly offended, this very reverend gentleman stood up, gathered his papers together, and strode away with this parting benediction: "It is evident I could not admit you into my Church, and as we have actually no point of contact, it seems useless to continue this discussion."

Unwittingly he had given expression to three important truths, all confirmed in the case of Jesus. (1) *Refusing admission into his Church*; Jesus in his own person was twice compelled to leave their place of worship by the leaders of the Church who eventually "murdered" him, and the so-called Catholic (i.e. Universal) Church throughout the Christian era has constantly treated truth-revealing "heretics" in a similar way, so that this bishop's benediction was true to type—the word "benediction" is used in no sarcastic sense, for one of the greatest blessings that can be conferred on any man is that "the truth should make him free" (John 8. 32) from ecclesiasticism in every shape and form. (2) *No point of contact*: this is best illustrated by our usual division of religion into creed concerning God, code, and ceremonial. The abundance of the bishop's heart did not prompt him to make any reference to God—even when pattering off his official creed he omitted the usual first casual mention of belief in, "God the Father Almighty", but as a professing Christian he worships Christ the supernatural human being, the sacrifice for sin, and worships too the "Catholic" Church which "lives by this altar"; he is consequently profoundly impressed, not with God's law, which he ignored in his confession of faith, but with the importance of conforming to the precepts and ordinances of the Church (p. 163), and finally this "great man for sacraments" is quite convinced that by means of these rites, particularly priestly confession and absolution with celebration of the eucharist, the Church holds the key to the gate of heaven. Certainly in all this there is "no point of contact" with the disregarded teaching of Jesus, who founded no Church, ordained no priests, and instituted no sacraments, but whose special mission it was to preach "the gospel of God", the Creator Spirit, the God of "mercy and not sacrifice", who expects his creatures to do his

will by conforming to his law of divine love, and thus—worshipping only in spirit and in truth—to gain entry into the kingdom of heaven.

(3) *Uselessness of religious discussion*; naturally this is the case with those who have no point of contact, but it should be *most particularly noted that those—like this bishop and professing Christians generally—who claimed to believe in his personal divinity, were just the very people Jesus most definitely pronounced incapable of hearing and understanding his spiritual message.* For example Nicodemus, an evidently very earnest and intelligent enquirer, came declaring that Christ's works proved he came from God (John 3. 2), but Jesus, ignoring this, at once told him he must be born of spirit, and gave him a strikingly accurate description of what spirit really is; finding, however, that Nicodemus did not understand even its literal meaning, Jesus naturally asked him—and through him asks all other Christ-worshipping teachers of religion—"Art thou the teacher of Israel and understandest not these things . . . ? How shall ye believe if I tell you heavenly things?"—in other words it is useless to discuss God's spiritual message with those whose minds are pre-occupied with paying homage to the mere messenger. Again it was from the "Jews which had believed him" personally (John 8. 31) that Jesus enquired if they knew his divine word of truth, and finding that this had in no way superseded their religious traditions, doctrines, and ceremonies, he declared that they too, and all who like them are bound with the fetters of ecclesiasticism, are actually unable to hear, and understand, his spiritual word (v. 43), so it is useless to discuss the religion of God the Spirit with them (v. 47). Still a third example has just been given (p. 128) in the case of his own chosen disciples, whose fervent protestation of belief in him, followed immediately by their base desertion, only proved the worthlessness of personal attachment to Christ as compared with the true spiritual union with God for which Jesus prayed so earnestly on their behalf. Undoubtedly then Jesus distinguished sharply between acceptance of his divine word of truth, which was all important, and devotion to his person which he disdained, but Christianity has established the worship of the man-god Jesus Christ by surrounding his person with a halo of miraculous circumstances, and transporting him to a throne in heaven, as detailed in the bishop's five fundamental points extracted from the official Christian creed. It should be noted that these five points have all been excluded from the true "gospel of God" just because they were personal, and because being miracles they can find no place in God's word of truth, but it is necessary now to show how irrational and false they really are. They fall naturally into two divisions, Christ's supernatural birth, represented by the bishop's thumb, and the atonement with its three associated miracles, forming the four fingers group.

Dealing first with the nativity, it may be pointed out that not only did Jesus never make any claim to virgin birth, but two

of the four evangelists give no account of this alleged proof of his divinity, while the two biblical versions of the event—contained in Luke's gospel and in the narrative portion of Matthew—were, as we have seen, quite unknown to Bishop Papias, who would certainly have mentioned them if they had been accepted as authentic by the primitive Church. The compiler of the biblical Matthew has no pretension to being a contemporary of Jesus, and though the writer of Luke's gospel claimed to have "traced the course of all things accurately from the first" (Luke 1. 3) yet Jesus was already thirty years old when Luke first met him, while this disciple is credited with writing his gospel more than sixty years after the birth of Jesus, and we know how tales of quite natural events, particularly in the childhood of famous people, tend in a few years to become distorted into incredible "old wives' fables". It is not surprising, therefore, to find that these two biblical accounts of Christ's birth are smothered in superstition, but if we carefully detach all their poetic legends of angelic visitations, prophetic dreams, etc., and adhere strictly to their plain matter-of-fact statements, they supply a perfectly reasonable description of the event, the truth of which can be confirmed by very strong indirect evidence. This is done in the following brief narrative taken word for word from the Bible, with only such explanations as are necessary to establish the natural sequence of events and harmonize the two accounts.

The gospel of Matthew commences, according to its usual procedure of supporting orthodox tradition, by tracing out a genealogy intended to prove that Jesus Christ was the son of David, in compliance with Old Testament prophecy; we shall show presently that this is purely fictitious and repudiated by Jesus himself, so, ignoring it for the moment, we pass on to the narrative itself. This begins (Matt. i. 18, 19): "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: when his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child. And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily." An Oriental woman's secluded life and loose-flowing garments would enable her to conceal her pregnant condition even from her betrothed for perhaps four months, so it was about this time that Joseph at last became aware of the fact, and then Mary did a very natural and very wise thing. If she had remained where she was she would have been an eyesore to her betrothed, who would probably have carried out his idea of rejecting her, and she would have become an object of scorn to her virtuous gossiping neighbours: instead of this, trusting that Joseph's simple compliant nature and his love for her would prevail in time, she decided to leave her secret with him, and to efface herself for a while; so we read: "And Mary arose in those days and went into the hill country *with haste*, unto a city of Judah; and entered into the

house of Zacharias and saluted Elizabeth" (Luke 1. 39, 40). As she expected, the result was that the great-hearted Joseph, having "thought on these things" during the next three months, decided to "take unto him his wife" (Matt. 1. 20, 24), letting it be "supposed" (Luke 3. 23) that he was the father of the child (Matt. 13. 55, and Luke 4. 22), which fully explains why "Mary abode with Elizabeth about three months and returned unto her house" (Luke 1. 56) at Nazareth (Luke 1. 26). Here Mary would naturally have remained after her long rough journey to "the hill country" of Judæa; it is inconceivable that she should have desired or been compelled to travel back again half the length of Palestine in her critical condition. Here in "their own city Nazareth" (Luke 2. 39) Joseph and Mary would naturally have been enrolled—for "all went to enrol themselves, every one to his own city" (Luke 2. 3)—when the census was taken; and here therefore in this same city, Jesus of Nazareth, as he is so frequently designated, was born. The remaining contradictory and altogether legendary parts of the biblical accounts are mainly adjustments to make them agree with the Bethlehem prophecy in Micah 5. 2 (cited in Matt. 2. 6. and in John 7. 42). For this purpose Matthew lays the scene all through at Bethlehem, the birth occurring at Joseph's house (Chap. 1. 24, and 2. 1 and 11), the entire course of events being directed by a long series of dreams (Chap. 1. 20; 2. 12, 13, 19 and 22) ending with the explanation that the family only went to dwell subsequently in Nazareth—of course under dream influence—in order to fulfil an unrecorded prophecy (Chap. 2. 22, 23). On the other hand Luke describes Nazareth as the permanent home of Joseph and Mary both before and after marriage, hence the fulfilment of the prophecy necessitated, in this case, the highly improbable story of the journey to Bethlehem with its romantic legends of the birth in the inn stable, the manger cradle, the appearance of "a multitude of the heavenly host" to shepherds, and numerous other signs, which have made such a strong appeal to the popular taste for superstition as to conceal completely the simple truth.

The straightforward unvarnished tale outlined above might be corroborated by extracts from uncanonical scriptures, but we shall restrict our confirmation to indirect proofs taken from what orthodox Christians regard as the revealed "word of God". It is scarcely necessary to emphasize how inherently true to life is this artless story, how natural it all is, and how for example the evident dismay caused by the unexpected discovery that Mary "was found with child", Joseph's attitude in the matter, and Mary's flight "with haste" to her kinswoman, taken together, completely dispose of the legend concerning the angel Gabriel's announcement to Mary with its obviously fabulous explanation of her conception.

In whatever way we read the Bible narrative one thing is

clear—Joseph was not the father of Jesus, and therefore even if his genealogical tables were true they could not in any way establish the right of Christ to be regarded as “the son of David” (Matt. i. 1); but we would scarcely expect an obscure Galilean carpenter to be provided with a complete lineage connecting him with ancient kings of Israel, and when the gospels offer a choice of two very different pedigrees, one through the descendants of David’s son, Nathan and another through the line of Solomon, then there can be no hesitation in saying that these genealogies are not only wholly irrelevant, but also quite unreliable.

The next thing to note is that Jesus knew the above natural story of his birth to be true, as shown by his allowing it to influence his whole after life and teaching, causing him for instance to embrace ardently his main doctrine that God is man’s only real father. He told his disciples to “call no man your father on earth” (Matt. 24. 9), and if we can accept the story of his playing truant, his answer to his mother on that occasion, “Wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business” (Luke 2. 49), shows that this idea was present in his mind when he was only twelve years old (v. 42). The open secret of his birth was well known in his own country and among his own kin, and naturally they had no faith in him (Mark 6. 3 to 6), in this connexion his description as “the carpenter, the son of Mary”, no mention being made of Joseph, is a very significant indication of the reason he was accorded no honour in his own house. This secret also supplies the key to the darker side of Christ’s life, for the shadow of this cloud, ever present in his mind, naturally drove him to brood in solitude (Luke 4. 1 and 42; 5. 16; and 6. 12) over the existence of sin and its evil effects in the world, with the inevitable result that he eventually developed into a religious fanatic, whose extreme views were bound to get him into trouble sooner or later.

His inveterate enemies the Pharisees found out this weak spot in his armour, and did not fail to take advantage of it when they stung him into fury by their bitter taunt, “We were not born of fornication” (John 8. 41), so when Jesus decided to adopt the rôle of Christ he must have searched diligently for some method of getting over this difficulty about his birth. It was impossible to deny the actual facts, and Jesus was far too shrewd to acknowledge that Joseph was not his father, and yet claim to be the promised son of David by virtue of Joseph’s genealogy; nor was he so impiously superstitious as to explain his unwedded mother’s quite normal pregnancy (Luke 2. 6) by an initial act of God—an explanation which would be rejected as unpardonable blasphemy if it were advanced in the case of any other erring maiden. Instead of making any such futile defence, Jesus accepted the situation and faced it quite characteristically in this way: “Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question, saying: ‘What think ye of the Christ? Whose son is he?’ They

say unto him ' The son of David '. He saith unto them ' How then doth David in the Spirit call him Lord, saying, " The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou on my right hand till I put thine enemies underneath thy feet " ? If David then calleth him Lord, how is he his son ? ' And no one was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions " (Matt. 22. 41-46). By waiting till there was a crowd and then bringing the matter forward himself, Jesus showed that he attached special importance to this apparently trifling quibble, which so effectually silenced the hair-splitting Pharisees it certainly makes it clear that Jesus would never have countenanced the issue of the gospel genealogies, it also invalidates all the supposed prophecies regarding the promised son of David, and generally it illustrates the danger arising from the common ecclesiastical practice of endowing parables and vague scripture references with fanciful meanings they were never intended to convey; the interpretation of oracular utterances by priests and sorcerers has always been a mischievous two-edged business

Passing from these points connected with the paternity of Jesus, and turning to the maternal aspect of the question, we find the natural story of Christ's birth abundantly confirmed by the attitude adopted towards Mary throughout the rest of the narrative, by the scant notice taken of her, and by the invariable lack of respect shown to her. Jesus, according to the biblical records, never evinced the smallest expression of affection towards his mother, whom he always treated with cold indifference; her presence seemed rather to irritate him judging by his few recorded replies to her, which were curt and ungracious to the point of rudeness, and more than once prefaced by the formal title of " Woman ". One can overlook a thoughtless truant boy showing no contrition for the sorrow he had caused his anxious mother, and answering her roughly, " How is it that ye sought me " ? (Luke 2 49), but he was an adult when he made his blunt retort in front of all the guests at the wedding feast, " Woman, what have I to do with thee " ? (John 2. 4), which surely proves that for the reason indicated he felt no love nor even respect for her. Again when " it was told him ' Thy mother and thy brethren stand without desiring to see thee ' ", the only notice he takes is to say, " my mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God and do it " (Luke 8. 19-21), and by a similar callous reply he repudiated the suggestion that his mother was especially blessed in giving birth to him (Luke 11. 27, 28). As might be expected the Gentile evangelist in his description of the final scene (John 19. 25-27) supplies the solitary touch of interest shown towards her, when he explains why he took this stricken woman to his own home; further in this connexion, when Christ is stated to have risen from the grave, and appeared to many people, there is no record of his visiting the mother who bore him in sorrow and anguish of mind and body,

who was faithful to him during life, and who was present when he hung upon the cross.¹ But the Christian Churches have found it to their interest to ignore all this, have even partly gone to the other extreme by elevating this erring mother to a position little if at all inferior to that of her deified son, and her worship has become a most popular form of idolatry, increasing enormously the wealth and influence of the crafty Church which instituted it. We may conclude then that there is not a particle of reliable evidence to support the superstition of Christ's virgin birth, but on the contrary the records of his whole life and teaching testify that Jesus was born in every respect the natural son of Mary.

We now pass on to the second division of the fundamental points cited by the bishop as the official Christian faith. "If Christ hath not been raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins" (1 Cor. 15. 17); here Paul balances the Christian faith between Christ's resurrection, and the atonement for sin, and we may add if Christ be not risen neither is he ascended into heaven, and if not ascended he cannot descend again to judge the world; so it is clear that these statements, all depending on the resurrection, hang or fall together, and the bishop's four points of faith are thus most strictly Pauline. Now with reference to the doctrine that Christ's death was a voluntary propitiatory sacrifice (Eph. 5. 2) to redeem mankind from sin (Titus 2. 14) surely the deplorable fact that it utterly failed to achieve this object is sufficient proof that it was never intended for any such purpose, or else we must believe that God had grievously miscalculated its effect: for in spite of this sacrifice all the great nations professing Christianity—at present suffering deservedly for the greatest crime in the history of the world, yet already preparing for further ghastly wars—are still at least as morally depraved, and in need of "salvation" as was the pagan world at the time of Christ's death. Did his crucifixion prevent the gross immorality and wickedness of the Christian Church itself during the Dark Ages? "In the name of Jesus Christ and his blessed virgin mother I have devastated my fairest provinces," wailed the Queen of Spain after she had allowed the Inquisition to do its foul work (p. 157-8). The question of Christ's death regarded as an atonement for sin is however dealt with elsewhere (p. 193 *et seq.*) so we can now concentrate attention on the all-important resurrection and its sequel.

"If Christ hath not been raised, your faith is vain"—Christians scarcely realize that their whole creed depends fundamentally on the miraculous nature of an event which the biblical records show to have been a quite natural occurrence, distorted by superstition, just as in the case of Christ's birth. The apostles had the strongest possible incentives for adopting the resurrection fable; they had left all and followed their master for three years; they firmly

¹ See however the probable explanation of this given on p. 141.

believed his admission that he was the expected Messiah, they treasured up his definite promise that he would appear in power and great glory during their lifetime, when they would receive their reward; they had accompanied him to Jerusalem, as he led them to expect, for this special purpose, and had actually proclaimed him with great joy on his triumphal entry into the city, and then, all their hopes were rudely crushed a few days later when they saw him, downcast and crestfallen, led away to prison and a shameful death. It was no wonder that these despondent simple-minded men gave ready credence to the wild contradictory rumours that gathered round the empty tomb, and formed them into a rough incoherent resurrection story, sufficient to satisfy their unexacting minds, to restore faith in their teacher, and to renew the hope that he would yet fulfil his promise to them: moreover the vision of angels in the empty tomb reported by the terrified women was corroborated so far as concerns the empty tomb, and soon apparently full confirmation of the resurrection of Jesus was obtained by his own actual bodily appearance on several occasions. The two essential parts of this story are, then, the discovery of the empty tomb, and the subsequent appearances of Jesus in person: how do the biblical accounts explain these seemingly miraculous occurrences?

The empty tomb! All four gospels narrate the taking down of the body from the cross by Joseph of Arimathæa, its removal to a tomb, and its subsequent disappearance, but the fourth evangelist, who alone writes with the sure touch of an actual eyewitness of the crucifixion, supplies the following most significant details: "Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb wherein was never man yet laid. There then because of the Jews' Preparation (for the tomb was nigh at hand) they laid Jesus" (John 19. 41, 42). This garden tomb was either a natural cave (John 11. 38) or more probably a brick vault with a low doorway, certainly spacious enough to contain several persons (Luke 24. 3; and John 20, 6, 8), and it was close to the public execution ground for malefactors, in all these respects very unlike what we should expect from Joseph's own tomb, which being hewn out of solid rock would naturally be a small excavation, situated in some private secluded property purchased specially for the purpose by this wealthy man, according to the widespread custom of oriental city magnates in all ages. Undoubtedly then there were two different sepulchres referred to in the narrative, and it is quite clear from the statement just quoted that, owing to the Preparation of the passover, the body was only laid in the garden tomb as a temporary resting place over the Sabbath, pending its final disposal in Joseph's "own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock" (Matt. 27. 60), this latter tomb being the only one referred to by the first three evangelists who wrote from hearsay. The Preparation no doubt accounts for the hasty occupa-

tion of the garden tomb, and if Joseph on his return visit forestalled the women this would explain the empty tomb, but it would offer no credible solution of the difficulty concerning the dead body becoming reanimated, appearing to several witnesses, and then disappearing once more, as stated in the Bible: a far more probable, and in all respects acceptable, explanation—covering the use of the garden tomb, its evacuation, and all the subsequent natural events recorded in the gospel narrative—may be found through intelligent interpretation of the account by the eyewitness contained in John 19. and 20.

In chapter 19 30 it is stated that Jesus "bowed his head and gave up his spirit", which simply means that he became unconscious so as to simulate death; that he did not really die at that time is clearly proved by the incident which occurred immediately after.¹ One of the scientific tests employed to ascertain if life is extinct in cases of suspended animation consists in making an incision into the flesh, when, if the wound bleeds, the circulation is still active, denoting that life persists; this is exactly what was done in Christ's case, when the soldier "with a spear pierced his side and straightway came there out blood and water" (v. 34). *This is the most tremendously significant and important fact in the biblical record for it is irrefutable proof that Jesus was still alive after being pronounced dead and as he was about to be removed from the cross, but if not dead he could not then have risen from the dead, and "if Christ be not raised then the Christian faith is vain", according to Paul, who formulated it.* Further the effusion of water through the wound shows that he was suffering from pleurisy, the commonest cause of which is consumption, which is frequently associated with a highly neurotic temperament, such as Jesus possessed, and this would also account for his being too feeble to carry his cross.² Now a casual spear thrust glancing off the curved ribs on the side of the chest would scarcely have seriously injured a normal fully expanded lung, and in the case of Jesus, whose chest was full of fluid pressing the lung away from the ribs, such a superficial wound would merely cause trifling bleeding and give exit to the effusion, thus relieving the pressure on the lung—in fact it was a rough and ready surgical operation, known as paracentesis, performed, we repeat, just before the living sufferer was removed from the cross. Crucifixion was intended to be a lingering death from exhaustion, and with this end in view the weight of the body was supported partly by a cross-piece nailed to the stem of the cross forming a crutch between the thighs, and partly by the feet resting on a pedestal or being bound to the cross, while the hands alone were nailed, not to carry the weight of the body but to keep the arms

¹ This point is discussed in detail by Fielding Hall in *The World Soul*, chap. 14.

² Fielding Hall quite overlooks the significance of the sudden gush of water which he mistakenly asserts was serum oozing from the clotted blood.

outstretched, and the sufferer was allowed to quench his thirst with spiced wine or vinegar ; thus there was nothing in it directly fatal, and a robust criminal could endure such exposure even for a couple of days. When therefore Jesus was reported as dead after only a few hours on the cross (Mark 15. 25, 34) " Pilate marvelled " at this, but being all through well disposed towards " this righteous man " he accepted the word of the centurion (Mark 15. 44 and 45)—who was also inclined to be lenient (Luke 23. 47)—and so, without any real examination, or any brutality to ensure death, Joseph was permitted to take him down from the cross at once, uninjured, except for the superficial spear wound through his side, and the small nail punctures through his finger clefts, not even a small hand bone being broken (John 19. 36).

We have enough information to indicate what must have happened next. The movements of the body during its descent from the cross naturally stimulated the circulation and aided the entry of air into the previously compressed lung, with the result that, while Joseph and Nicodemus were bending over him, wrapping the body " in linen cloths with the spices " (v. 40), Jesus, to their intense joy, gave some sign of life—a slight movement, an opening of the eyes, a gasp or sigh of relief, or a feeble moan—causing them to carry him quickly away from spectators, into the neighbouring quiet garden where the vacant tomb was, and " there they laid Jesus " (v. 42). Jesus alive, not the dead " body of Jesus " which Joseph had begged from Pilate (v. 38), not the " body of Jesus " which they had started to prepare for burial (v. 40), but Jesus himself—there they laid the living Jesus (v. 42). Aided by such attention as they could give and the cool restfulness of the vault, the sufferer recovered quickly and probably fell asleep from sheer exhaustion, after his helpers had assured him they would return later when the place would be quite deserted, bringing him food and drink and raiment, with a trusty servant to attend him during the Sabbath, and another on guard outside, pending his removal to some place of safety and comfort. Obviously the utmost secrecy was necessary, and as the distracted women, who were watching in the vicinity, might inadvertently betray him in their excitement, it was decided to conceal the truth from them until Jesus was transferred elsewhere, and meantime to close the tomb entrance with a stone against all intruders. As they dare not risk bringing him back through the gate of Jerusalem, they arranged for him to go to the convenient quiet village of Emmaus, and stay there until public interest in him had subsided, and he was strong enough to travel back to Galilee ; it was while the first step in this plan was being taken before dawn on the Sunday, that the women paid their return visit, and were the first to learn that Jesus had recovered and would go later into Galilee.

This account of how the tomb became empty, through the natural recovery of Jesus from a swoon, is consistent with all

the details in the other gospels except one: the compiler of Matthew's narrative, writing probably a century or so later, describes the superstitious notions "spread abroad among the Jews *until this day*" (Chap. 28. 15) concerning the matter, and, as usual with this writer, he repeats the facts (Matt. 27. 59-61) in almost the exact words of Mark (Chap. 15. 46, 47), and then adds untrustworthy details designed to support some current Church doctrine of his time—in this instance the doctrine of Christ's miraculous resurrection after death. He begins by asserting that the chief priests and Pharisees knew that Christ anticipated rising after three days (Chap. 27. 63), although two of their own number who were secret disciples of Jesus were so ignorant of this that they actually came prepared with spices for burial; in the same way his devoted women followers showed that they too did not expect any resurrection, while his two most intimate apostles, Peter and "the disciple Jesus loved", are expressly stated not to have known "the scriptures that he must rise again from the dead" (John 20. 9). On the flimsy pretext that the disciples might steal the corpse and proclaim him risen, Matthew (Chap. 27. 64) represents the chief priests as spending that particularly holy sabbath day of passover week (John 19. 31) in obtaining a guard from the hated Roman governor—entry into whose palace meant pollution (John 18. 28)—and "making as sure as they could" by going out to "the place of a skull" and sealing up their victim's body in the sepulchre (Matt. 27. 65, 66). This most highly improbable action leads up to a description of the miraculous opening of the sealed tomb, after a great earthquake, by "an angel of the Lord descended from heaven", whose "appearance was as lightning" and who "rolled away the stone and sat upon it" causing the guard "to become as dead men" (Matt. 28. 2-4): such superstition, which finds no support in the other gospels, only makes the resurrection legend, if possible, more incredible.

The quite natural recovery of Jesus being thus established his various appearances recorded in the four gospels fall equally naturally into line, as shown by their following brief recapitulation, which covers all the incidents in their proper sequence.

After resting all the Sabbath day Jesus and his two attendants, to avoid attracting attention, made a very early start, and are just on the point of leaving the vault when they hear the noise caused by some one approaching: fearing his enemies, Jesus hides in the bushes, while the others wait in the tomb to see who it is. The women arrive, Mary Magdalene draws near and peering through the open doorway sees the two men, but the light from a lantern or torch shining on their white clothes dazzles her eyes accustomed to the darkness, and causes her to mistake them for angels (Luke 24. 4, 23, and John 20. 12). In answer to their question she states her trouble, and hearing some movement behind her, turns and sees Jesus, who makes himself known, and tells her to go and

inform his disciples that he is "not yet ascended unto the Father"—i.e. he has not yet died—but expects to do so shortly (John 20. 17); this she does, but by the time Peter and Philip arrive at the tomb Jesus and his companions are well on their way to Emmaus. Jesus rests there throughout the heat of the day, and, taking a short stroll in the cool of the evening, meets two disciples on the road; they do not recognize his haggard face, perhaps purposely concealed by a voluminous eastern head-dress, but his weak, wounded hands betray him as he tries to break bread, and with a hurried word of caution he departs to his own lodging, leaving them to rush excitedly back to Jerusalem, bringing the news to the eleven apostles (Luke 24. 13-35), who refused to believe them (Mark 16. 13).

Jesus now rests a whole week¹ quietly at Emmaus, and then, having heard that the apostles doubted his recovery, he decides to pay them a furtive visit, and convince them by showing them his wounds and eating in their presence (Luke 24. 36 to end): after this they accompany him to Bethany, where he takes leave of them in order to spend the night with, and say a last farewell to, his loved ones in that village, even at the risk of detection in a place where he was so well known (John 11. 1 and 5; 12. 1, 2). From thence he went into Galilee as arranged (Mark 16. 7, etc.), probably to Bethsaida the home of his beloved Gentile disciple, Philip, to whose care he had committed his mother: this being also the city of Peter and Andrew it is only natural they should foregather with some of the other disciples there, and that Jesus should "manifest himself again" to them on the specially appointed mountain (Matt. 28. 16) and on the lake shore (John 21.); these last references, particularly his beach breakfast at dawn (John 21. 4, 9), suggest that Jesus was living in some solitary retreat rather than in the city itself, partly from inclination, partly for safety. And

¹ The first of the two appearances to the disciples in the upper room recorded in John 20. 19-23 is omitted here because the whole incident seems unnatural and unsupported by other evidence. It is in the highest degree improbable that Jesus in his weak state could have travelled the seven miles back to Jerusalem that same evening; moreover he lacked the object of correcting the unbelief of the disciples (Mark 16. 13, 14) since he could only have heard about this later on in the week, a point which leaves his first stated display of his hands and side rather meaningless (John 20. 20). It is unlikely that Jesus would have repeated such a visit specially to convince the absentee, Thomas. It is unlikely that the other Gospel narratives should overlook an appearance so impressive by its special benediction. It is unlikely that at this first meeting Jesus should have repeated his greeting, and the verses 21-23 describing this superfluous salutation have all the appearance of being interpolated for the purpose of conferring on the Church the divine right to forgive sins, which the disciples never claimed, which they never exercised, and which we may be quite sure Jesus never stultified his teaching regarding forgiveness by conferring. For all these reasons John's record of this incident may be considered unreliable and the verses 21-23 as another of the many Church interpolations inserted to support false ecclesiastical doctrines.

finally while staying in or near Bethsaida there can be little doubt the malady (p. 138) from which Jesus suffered—already so aggravated by the cruel ordeal he had endured as to make him almost unrecognizable¹—soon ran its fatal course and his “spirit returned to God who gave it” (Eccles. 12. 7), or in his own words he “ascended to my Father and your Father” (John 20. 17), a poetic expression which may have suggested the myth of his bodily ascension into heaven.

Thus, as in the case of Christ's birth, there is no reason whatever for accepting the superstitious legends associated with his death and the empty tomb—claiming that his dead body was miraculously resuscitated after being “three days and three nights in the heart of the earth”—but, on the contrary, commonsense reading of the biblical record offers a complete rational explanation of all the natural circumstances related in connexion with this event. The only possible resurrection of Jesus, one that might even yet take place, is the revival of his divine message—which he substituted for his person—buried for nineteen centuries in “the whited sepulchre” of ecclesiastical Christolatry, the entrance to which is closed with an “exceeding great” rock of superstitious falsehood and pagan ritual, but “who shall roll us away the stone”, so as to allow “God's word of truth” to emerge and regenerate the world?

Just as it has been shown that Christ's body did not rise miraculously from the dead but merely recovered from a swoon and then succumbed to its disease in the ordinary way, so too it appears that there is no reliable evidence at all to support the legend of its miraculous ascension into heaven. It is not surprising that Paul—who so mistakenly maintained Christ's bodily reappearance after his crucifixion to be proof of his miraculous resurrection (1 Cor. 15)—simply assumed its ascension into heaven as the necessary sequel of this alleged resurrection, as the necessary fulfilment of the vague poetic statement, “The Lord said unto my lord ‘sit thou at my right hand’,” as the necessary prelude to the promised appearance “in clouds of glory”, but he nowhere claimed that he himself or the disciples, or any one else, had actually seen this astounding occurrence. Nor did Peter make any such claim, either in his speeches as recorded in the Acts, or in the epistles attributed to him, or in his gospel written by Mark from his dictation which ends at chapter 16. 8, the remainder of the biblical Mark, containing the description of the ascension, being printed separately in the Revised Version with a marginal note that the passage is omitted in the two oldest Greek manuscripts

¹ All the Gospels contain references to his changed form (Mark 16. 12), and these, particularly the statement in Luke 24. 37 that his first appearance to the apostles made them “suppose they beheld a spirit”, strongly indicate the rapid emaciation of the last stages of consumption, which causes the sufferer, as is commonly said, “to look like a ghost”.

while others have a different ending. This separate addition (Mark 16. 9 to end) betrays its character in many ways: it begins with a second account of Mary Magdalene's visit to the tomb, correcting in the 10th verse the statement made in the 8th verse that she "said nothing to any one" about it, and then, after a brief mention of the appearance to the two disciples at Emmaus, a most extraordinary farewell message is put into the mouth of Jesus, immediately before he "was received up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God" (v. 19). This parting communication commences by his "upbraiding them with their unbelief and hardness of heart because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen" (v. 14), and then he tells them (v. 16) "he that disbelieveth shall be condemned"; this was not pleasant for the disciples, but worse still, although Jesus himself had never baptized any one, and particularly had not baptized these apostles, nor had ever instructed them to baptize either in his own or in God's name, yet he assures them that only "he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (v. 16)—being unbelieving and unbaptized they were therefore doubly condemned. Christ then goes on to confer on all "them that believe" the power to cast out devils in his name, although he had himself taught that such sorcery is "iniquity" (Matt. 7, 22, 23): further all Christian believers were "to speak in new tongues", they were to handle snakes and drink poison without ill effects, and to heal the sick by laying hands on them (v. 17, 18)—in short this spurious ending was added much later, with the express purpose of "confirming the word" (v. 20) regarding those miraculous powers with which superstition credited the unbelieving, unbaptized apostles, as related in the Acts, and more particularly to justify belief in the myth of Christ's bodily ascension into heaven. Thus this passage stands condemned by its own inherent falsehood as well as by its omission from the earliest and therefore more reliable scriptures, and if it were deleted from the Bible, as it might well be, there would then be no mention at all of the ascension in Mark's gospel.

This last statement is likewise true of Matthew's gospel, which copies Mark's message telling the disciples to "go into Galilee, there shall ye see him" (Mark 16. 7), emphasizing it by a double repetition (Matt. 28. 7, 10); the meeting is duly described (Matt. 28. 16, 17) and this terminates the gospel without the slightest reference to Christ's ascension into heaven.

In Luke's gospel we do indeed find the bald unsupported statement that Jesus "was carried up into heaven" (Luke 24. 51) but here again we are faced with a marginal note (R.V.), "some ancient authorities omit these words". It is simply childish to accept such an incredible miracle as the ascension of Christ's body into heaven on the strength of this one bare and very doubtful assertion, more especially as Luke's two accounts of this event, in his gospel and in the Acts, differ so widely between themselves

and with other biblical statements. For example in Luke's gospel all the events connected with Christ's reappearance until he was "carried up into heaven" are described as taking place within twenty-four hours after the women's visit to the tomb on the Sunday morning, although the same writer in the Acts (Chap. 1. 3) states definitely that Christ continued "appearing unto them by the space of forty days" after which "he was taken up and a cloud received him out of their sight". Further Luke ignores the Galilean appearances altogether, stating indeed, both in his gospel and in the Acts, that the disciples were commanded to tarry in the city of Jerusalem, which is quite irreconcilable with Matthew's statement that "the eleven disciples", including of course Luke, "went into Galilee, unto the mountain where Jesus had appointed them" (Matt. 28. 16), while John gives a detailed description of another apparently chance meeting on the shore of the sea of Galilee (John 21. 1). Again it may be pointed out that the parting words attributed to Christ in Luke's gospel, in the fictitious ending to the biblical Mark, and in the first chapter of Acts have very little in common. In view of such facts as these it is surely only reasonable to follow the "ancient authorities who omit 'and was carried up into heaven'," ¹ accepting Luke's statement that Jesus led the disciples out to Bethany and parted from them there (Chap. 24. 50, 51), and assuming that he did so naturally in order to spend the night at the house of Lazarus and his sisters in this village, before proceeding into Galilee as related by the other evangelists.

Fortunately amongst all these conflicting and unreliable statements concerning the miraculous ascension of Christ's body into heaven, there is one generally recognized competent authority to whom we can apply in order to ascertain the real truth. The "disciple whom Jesus loved" must have been amongst the eleven disciples on the Galilean mountain if Matthew's account be true; he must have been amongst the eleven as they sat at meat probably in Jerusalem, where Jesus was received up into heaven if the fictitious ending to the biblical Mark were true; he must have been amongst the eleven whom Jesus led out to Bethany on the first night after his recovery when, according to the biblical Luke, he was carried up into heaven, and he is named amongst those

¹ This correction would of course remove the discrepancy between Luke and Acts as regards the time of the ascension but only by destroying the whole case for this miracle, because then we should be faced with the fact that Matthew, the genuine Mark (ending Chap. 16. 8), the corrected Luke, and the eyewitness John all contain no description of this crowning event of Christ's life: there would then remain only the unsupported account in the Acts. If this were written by Luke, as is generally admitted, then why did he omit such an all-important episode from his gospel to which it naturally belongs? If the Acts were not written by Luke then all the evidence of the ascension left is an account by an unknown writer contained in what would then be a false preface intended to mislead its readers into believing Luke to be its author.

who about six weeks later "returned to Jerusalem from Mount Olivet" after witnessing his ascension into the clouds as recorded in the Acts (Chap. 1. 10-12). Now we have seen that this disciple is also formally and credibly certified to be the writer of the fourth gospel, and when we turn to this for information we find that, not only is there no confirmation of any of these various events at which he must have been present if they had really occurred, but he actually gives *no description of any such astounding incident as the miraculous ascension of Christ's body into heaven*. If this occurrence had actually taken place Christ would have been far beyond the reach of his enemies, so there could be no object in suppressing such a tremendously important episode; on the contrary the writer would be bound to give it the utmost publicity in his gospel, if, as stated, it was written "that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God" (John 20. 31), for no more convincing proof of Christ's divinity could possibly be advanced than this crowning miracle, his actual reception into heaven, as seen by the eyewitness writer himself and ten other observers. His complete silence as regards this all-important matter appears indeed to have a twofold significance; on the one hand it affords proof positive that this eyewitness, who was most intimately connected with the whole affair, knew apparently nothing of the miraculous ascension alleged to have taken place at Jerusalem, and on the other hand the fact that this well-informed disciple gives no explanation of what happened eventually strongly supports the view that he was concealing Jesus in or near his own home at Bethsaida, for it was obviously imperative to refrain from recording this fact as long as the fugitive was alive. If, as seems certain, Jesus succumbed soon after to the consumption from which he suffered (pp. 138, and 142 footnote) it would still have been highly important in the interests of Joseph, of Nicodemus, and of Philip himself, that the circumstances attending Christ's temporary recovery should be kept strictly secret: this is an additional reason for considering the last chapter of this gospel—describing Philip's identification of Jesus by the sea of Galilee—to have been written probably after the time of Philip's death (p. 121) and may perhaps also explain the abrupt and misleading ending of the genuine Mark (16. 8), and Luke's still more deliberate suppression, indeed actual denial, of the Galilean visit. This initial compulsory silence regarding the real facts naturally favoured the invention and spread of the ascension legends, and later on, when the truth might have been published without danger to the participants, the popular superstition concerning Christ's ascension had become so firmly established as the essential link between his accepted resurrection and his expected reappearance, that any chance survivor who knew and proclaimed the real truth would of course have been treated as a heretical antichrist and his evidence suppressed.

There being no support in the narrative part of the fourth gospel for the important Church doctrine of the ascension, an attempt has apparently been made to remedy this by an appropriate interpolation. In chapter 3 the verses 13, 14, and 15 break the thread of the conversation with Nicodemus in a peculiarly awkward way, the abrupt mention of the ascension and the equally irrelevant simile between the legendary graven image of Moses and Christ's crucifixion strongly suggesting that these verses are extraneous. Indeed the 13th verse could not possibly have been spoken by Jesus as described, for in it he is made to refer to himself as having already ascended into heaven, "And no man hath ascended into heaven but he that descended out of heaven, *even the Son of man which is in heaven*"; and as regards the fictitious prophecy of his crucifixion (vs. 14, 15) all such statements are discredited by the simple fact that the disciples right up to the very end were totally ignorant of Christ's tragic fate, as shown by all their recorded words and actions. Let us complete the proof that these verses are extraneous by deleting them, thus reuniting verses 12 and 16, and slightly paraphrasing the passage so as to bring out its real spiritual meaning (p. 123) strictly in the way that Jesus tried to teach Nicodemus, and all other slavishly literal interpreters, to do with his "words that are spirit and are life" (John 6. 63): it will then be seen that the "heavenly things" mentioned in verse 12 are fully and beautifully explained in the restored context: "If I told you earthly things and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you heavenly things? How God so loved the world that he gave the Son his God-begotten word of truth, that whosoever doeth this, should not perish, but have eternal life. For God sent not the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through his word of truth . . . He that doeth the truth . . . his works . . . have been wrought in God" (v. 21).

This statement that Jesus was not sent to judge the world naturally leads to the last fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith as cited by the bishop, the doctrine that Christ will some day return in person to this earth, in order to sit in judgment on all the human beings who have lived in our world since it became habitable. We have seen that this fantastic idea originated in a "vision of the head", attributed to an exceptionally superstitious Jewish sorcerer during the Babylonian captivity (p. 117), and was apparently applied by Christ to himself—at least he was credited in the gospels and other New Testament writings with promising most definitely, on several occasions, that he would return immediately after the impending overthrow of Jerusalem, and during the lifetime of that generation. The fulfilment of this promise was most eagerly expected by the apostles; it formed the burden of all their teaching; it was the chief inspiration in Paul's most impressive testimony, and the hope or the fear of the

second advent induced, and still induces, large numbers of superstitious people to hand over all their worldly goods to the Church, and become devoted Christian converts. But as the years rolled by the question inevitably became urgent amongst the early Christians, "Where is the promise of his coming, for all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation?" (2 Pet. 3. 4), and the writer of the epistle, with much circumlocution can only reply (v. 9): "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness, but is long-suffering to you-ward, not wishing that any should perish." Finally the aged apostle John, the last surviving representative of the group standing by (Matt. 16. 28) on the term of whose lives the promise depended, tries pathetically to maintain the fiction by stating twice over "it is the last hour" (1 John 2. 18), giving as his reason that there were antichrists in the world just as Christ had predicted (Matt. 24. 5, 24); but this poor grain of comfort did not even convince the simple old man himself, since he continues (v. 28): "Abide in him that *IF he shall be manifested*, we may have boldness, and not be ashamed before him at his coming." This doubting clause "if he shall be manifested", repeated in the second verse of the next chapter, seems to toll the knell of the dying faith, for with the passing of John, the promise ceased for ever, having been definitely limited to that generation (Matt. 24. 34, etc.), "by the word of the Lord" as Paul said, and no authority could amend that broken pledge or extend its appointed period.

Seeing then that we have a biblically recorded scientific test proving that Christ did not rise from the dead, and in addition have no reason to suppose his body ever ascended into heaven, and further still, it is an undeniable fact that Christ did not return at the time he definitely appointed—we are bound to accept Paul's own conclusion, that the Christian faith generally, including faith in the second advent, must therefore be vain. And indeed it requires a morbidly superstitious mind, or an intense and perverse early training, for any educated person, acquainted with the harmonious scheme of the Universe, to believe honestly that a human body was caught up into heaven nineteen hundred years ago, and has ever since been seated on a throne at the right hand of a personal god, somewhere in the airless frigid depths of space, waiting to come and judge the world: and yet during a great part of the Christian era, Christian priests have persecuted, tortured to death, and burned alive their fellow creatures for refusing to subscribe to such irrational doctrines. Even in these so-called enlightened days the helpless children of Christian parents are being assiduously taught these superstitions, and the parents themselves support Churches which insist on their admitting at their baptism, at their confirmation, and at the regular Church services, their belief in the following official string of deceptions: after professing to believe in "God the Father" to whom they pray as "*Our Father which art in heaven*",

thus claiming to be "sons of God", they continue, "and in Jesus Christ his *only* son our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried, he descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead, he ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead". The Churches of Christendom by propagating such false irrational superstition, with a view to deifying Christ's person, have to a large extent made void the pure spiritual "gospel of the only true God" preached by Jesus.

UNIVERSAL

Reviewing the first two sections of this chapter one can scarcely fail to be struck by the complete contrast between the ideals expressed in the pure "gospel of God" taught by Jesus, the witness of truth, the embodiment of "peace on earth, good will towards men", and on the other hand the ideals of the Church which worships Christ, the miracle working usurper of divinity, whose mission was "to send not peace on the earth but a sword". The teacher Jesus, and the man-god Christ are indeed totally distinct from each other, and when separately considered it at once becomes apparent that it is Christ not Jesus who is divided, it is invariably the Christ, not Jesus, who forms the central figure round which the fiercely contending Christian sects have waged incessant strife, and it is Christ, not Jesus, who is the fruitful source of all the "false doctrines, heresy and schism" which effectually prevent Christianity becoming the true universal religion. By assuming the rôle of the promised Messiah or Christ, Jesus became quite unable to carry out his own teaching in actual practice, as shown by his bitter hatred of his enemies, his changed attitude towards miracles, and his exorcism of "devils": his simple teaching concerning doing the will of the heavenly Father became changed into misleading parables, mysteries connected with his own person, and prophecies of impending doom, a change adopted in order to conform to the Christ pose, vaguely foreshadowed in the pagan mythology of the Old Testament; the consequence was, his short life of fierce strife, and of sorcerous signs intended to prove his Christhood, ended in his premature tragic death and final admission that he was forsaken by his God.

His own chosen disciples, who influenced him to accept the title of "Christ", and who proclaimed him publicly with Hosannas as the long expected "son of David" come to "restore the Kingdom to Israel", being "unlearned and ignorant men", regarded the quite natural events associated with the recovery of Jesus after his crucifixion as sufficient grounds for superstitious belief in his miraculous resurrection from the dead. This induced Peter to

announce that, "God hath made him both Lord and Christ this Jesus whom ye crucified" (Acts 2. 36), and thus to inaugurate the first period of Christian strife and Christian sorcery, which was to terminate during the lifetime of that generation, by the final reappearance of Christ in the clouds of heaven. When the ardent Pharisaic convert Paul, without any personal knowledge of Jesus, assumed "the care of all the churches", he tried to reunite the "divided Christ" by adapting his worship to the popular sacrificial ritual common to both Jews and Gentiles: this he did by representing Christ's death as Jehovah's new covenant sacrifice for sin, in flagrant opposition to the teaching of Jesus—borrowed by him from the Old Testament—that "God desires mercy and not sacrifice" and freely forgives the sins of those who themselves show forgiveness. This error led Paul to institute the sacrament of what he called "the Lord's Supper", to promulgate the doctrine of the triune god, with Christ as its second person, and generally speaking to construct what he described as "my gospel" out of the errors listed on pages 102 and 103, which all pivot upon the deified Christ but find no place in the TRUE "gospel of God" preached by Jesus.

When the apostolic generation had passed away without the promised reappearance of Christ taking place, the early Christian Church—which Paul had naturally organized on the Jewish and pagan, temple, priest, and altar model, so scathingly denounced by Jesus—continued the Pauline system without question, but there being nothing in the extant records of the teaching of Jesus to support its false doctrines, attempts were made to overcome this difficulty by copious fallacious interpolations in the accounts of Christ's life, the most misleading examples of which have been exposed. Error begat error, and thus was introduced an ever-growing mass of controversial matter, of creeds and doctrines, sacraments and devotional exercises, "much speaking" prayers and penances, and all the "grievous burdens" of ecclesiasticism, the whole being entirely at variance with the plain simple spiritual truth which Jesus said he came specially to preach.

As the result of all this, one may say that bitter strife, crude superstition, and a delusive promise are the chief characteristics displayed in the narrative of the Christ life, when separated from the TRUE teaching of Jesus: similar strife, gross superstition, and a prophecy that failed characterized the inauguration of the early Christian church, as described in the apostolic and Pauline records; fierce bloody strife and cruel persecution, the grossest superstition and sacerdotal corruption defile the history of mediæval Christianity, and still sectarian strife, deplorable superstition, and priestly lust of wealth and pomp and temporal power dominate war-exhausted Christendom at the present day. Christ's apostles prophesied falsely, Christian priests bear rule by their means, and the war-wasted Christolatrous nations love to have it so, "and what will ye do in the end thereof"? (Jeremiah 5. 31): the spirit of antichrist

must come and rid the world of all such Christian strife, Christolatrous superstition and ecclesiastical error, *but this spirit must be pro-Jesus*, confessing that Jesus was a man who spoke divine truth (John 8. 40) emanating from God (1 John 4. 3). Shakespeare makes a fool say,¹ "give me leave to speak my mind and I will through and through cleanse the foul body of the infected world if they will patiently receive my medicine", but Jesus claimed that this could really be effected by the universal adoption of the simple gospel of reciprocal love between God and man (see next section), and we may well marvel that this gospel of universal peace and joy, the fruit of the one universal Spirit, has been rejected by the warring Christian sects, though in every way suitable for universal acceptance.

EXALTING

Jesus adopted the world-old and world-wide precept "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Lev. 19. 18) by saying: "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another," etc. (John 13. 34, 35), and having thus appropriated "the royal law according to the scriptures" (James 2. 8)—Egyptian (p. 65), Confucian, Buddhist and Greek, as well as the Hebrew, scriptures—he pronounced it to be the distinguishing mark of his genuine followers: "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." It must now be shown that this exalting doctrine of love, which is the whole gist of the TRUE "gospel of God" taught by Jesus, scarcely enters at all into Christianity, meaning thereby, Paul's Christolatrous gospel with all its many superstitions and errors, more or less accepted, as the Christian faith, by those who profess and call themselves Christians. Paul expended his utmost eloquence in praise of this cardinal virtue, love, which "never faileth", is greater than faith, greater than hope, and "without which we are nothing" (1 Cor. 13), and by disguising his gospel with a false covering of this divine grace, he succeeded in getting it accepted by Christendom, in preference to the gospel of real love taught by Jesus. The difference between these fundamentally opposed gospels (p. 82), in regard specially to this doctrine of love, may be stated thus: Jesus preached that the only true God was the creator and begetter of all, who therefore quite naturally had a Father's love for all his rational creatures, requiring from them neither sacrifice, nor penances, nor ritual worship, but only that they should love him, and love each other, and love even their enemies, thus through love becoming perfect even as the Father himself is perfect; *this was the complete gospel of divine love according to Jesus, and Christ does not appear in it at all*. Contrast with this the Pauline gospel the whole gist of which

¹ *As you like it*

is that Christ's death was a sin offering to the deity. This bald statement alone proves that the god which Christianity derived from Paul was not actuated by love, for how could a loving god exact such an abominably cruel penalty so entirely opposed to the precept "I will have mercy and not sacrifice"? Even if we accept Paul's statements that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit" (1 Cor. 2. 14), so that "they that are in the flesh cannot please God", and are "at enmity with him" (Rom. 8. 7, 8), how is it that Paul's Christian deity did not show his love in accordance with the divine law, by freely forgiving these his enemies without any sacrifice, more especially as he himself created that human nature whose inherent enmity was the cause of offence?

"Qh, Thou, who Man of baser Earth didst make
And who, with Eden, didst devise the Snake
For all the Sin wherewith the Face of Man
Is blacken'd, Man's forgiveness give—and take!"
—"Rubaiyat" of OMAR KHAYYAM.

If for some extraordinary occult reason an expiatory sacrifice were absolutely necessary, how could the just judge of all the world exact it from an innocent victim, instead of from the guilty, which was surely far worse than the principle condemned by Jesus, of making the guilty render the due measure of their guilt, "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth"? But most inexplicable of all, this Christian god was not appeased even by his tortured, bleeding, human sacrifice, for Paul represents him as seated on a throne in heaven, still threatening judgment, still vowing vengeance (Heb. 10. 30), still the same "consuming fire" (Heb. 11. 29) as of old (Deut. 4. 24), while John, who asserts of him that "God is love" (1 John 4. 8), yet records as a divine "Revelation" the numerous gruesome horrors ushering in the final appalling consummation of everlasting punishment, executed by the occupant of the great white throne, who is so terrible that "from his face the earth and the heaven fled away" (Rev. 20. 11). Surely all this proves incontestably that this Christian god is "none other god but Jehovah", the god of Paul's pagan ancestors, a god rejected by Jesus because in no way TRUE (p. 71), a god utterly devoid of the divine grace of love.

Nor can this grace be specially associated with the sacrificial victim, for as we shall see later (p. 194), common sense reading of the biblical narrative shows how erroneous is the popular Pauline idea that Christ, actuated by love, offered himself as a voluntary atonement for the sins of mankind, and, apart from this, love seems to have scarcely influenced the course of Christ's short contentious life. We have seen for example that his whole record shows not the slightest trace of filial love, and he likewise had no personal experience either of conjugal or parental love. Much sentimental eloquence has been wasted over Christ's compassion for the sick

and suffering, as displayed in his recorded miracles of healing, but even if we accept these legendary infringements of God's established order, ascribed to all religious teachers in superstitious ages, they are really no evidence of love. Surely any ordinary person would derive immense satisfaction in curing the sick or relieving suffering if he could do it without the least cost, trouble, or inconvenience, in fact by merely saying the necessary word, as Christ is reputed to have done; moreover in many cases these miracles were admittedly performed not from compassion, but for the express purpose of proving Christ's claims to supernatural power, which suggests that this was the real motive in the other cases also. Considering next Christ's life generally from the same point of view, how can the idea of loving motives be reconciled with his own definite declaration, proved true by the whole history of Christendom, that he came "not to send peace on the earth but a sword", and to set at variance even those bound together by the closest family ties? It was not love which caused him to blight a fig-tree with his curse for not bearing fruit out of season, nor was it the love taught by Jesus which led Christ to tongue-thrash and whip-lash his enemies, and to utter woes and fierce denunciations against large classes of people whom he disapproved, and to threaten whole villages and cities with a worse fate than Sodom in the day of judgment, because they refused to be convinced by his "mighty works".

On several different occasions and in various ways—notably in the parable of Dives and Lazarus, and in his prophecy of the second advent—Christ conjured up very vivid word pictures of the hereafter as he conceived it: over and over again he repeats with much detail that the punishment he himself would inflict for misconduct in this transitory life would be to "depart from me, ye cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt. 25. 41). If words have any meaning at all, if reiterated statements have any significance, then there can be no doubt in the minds of unbiased readers of the Bible that Christ firmly believed in actual Hell fire, in the flames of which not only the wicked, but the leaders of the Jewish religion (Matt. 23. 33), every rich person, and likewise all those who rejected his doctrine, would be tortured through all eternity. And it may be added that his infatuated followers throughout all the centuries during which Christianity held its paralyzing sway over men's minds and bodies, not only never questioned this belief in endless torment, but were ever ready to convince heretical unbelievers by condemning them to a foretaste of it in this world; truly there was "weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth" in those dread days of Christian persecution. With the progress of secular knowledge and enlightenment however, this atrocious doctrine had to be somewhat modified, for no modern priest could hope to retain the popularity of himself and his creed if he told the wealthy members of his congregation, that it was "easier for a camel to go through the eye of

a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God" (Matt. 19. 24), and that their ultimate fate would be to endure for ever the flame in which Dives was tormented, "where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched" (Mark 9. 48): so in order not to offend the susceptibilities of a more rational age Christ's oft described torture can, *when desired*, be refined and explained away as being "purely allegorical".¹ But if modern Christians dispose of Christ's hell in this convenient manner, then they have no alternative but to acknowledge that Christ's heaven is equally "allegorical": if they regard the twice repeated statement, "The angels shall come forth and sever the wicked from among the righteous and shall cast them into the furnace of fire" (Matt. 13. 41, 42, 49, 50), as being a mere figure of speech, they cannot expect that the inheritance by the blessed of "the kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world" will prove a reality; if they refuse to believe in the possibility of the appalling punishment allotted to those on Christ's left hand, they are bound also to discredit the dazzling rewards promised to those on his right, even though the hope of gaining this recompense is the chief motive of the Christian faith. And is it any wonder that Christendom, which deified and worships this false prophet of the second advent with his threats of hell and eternal damnation, should reap what it has sowed, in the form of perpetual strife, persecution, bloody wars, and the many evil fruits of superstitious fears, remorse for sin, penances and other "grievous burdens" imposed by a false and avaricious ecclesiasticism which has led the Christian world astray from the beginning? Undoubtedly then the avowed strife promoter who proclaimed "not peace on earth but a sword" is indeed far removed from the preacher of the gospel of real divine love who taught, "by this shall all men know that ye are my disciples if ye have love one to another"; the usurper of divinity, the second person in the Christian godhead, was a suitable throne companion and regent for Paul's cruel personal pagan god Jehovah, but assuredly he has no affinity with the one spiritual God, the loving heavenly Father, "the only true God", preached by Jesus.

The mention of real divine love raises the last point to be dealt with here; divine love must be controlled by reason, for if pushed to its extreme limits as required by Jesus Christ, love itself becomes a bad master, instead of a good servant. Thus, almsgiving if performed with discretion is of course a commendable form of love, but this is certainly not the case when a man "sells all that he has and distributes it to the poor", thereby reducing himself for the

¹ The bishop referred to on p. 128, when asked if he believed in hell, replied evasively that he "believed in a hell of remorse". One wonders what exactly was the hell into which Christ descended for the couple of days between his death and resurrection, as stated in the bishop's official creed, for Christ himself told his companion on the cross, "to-day, shalt thou be with me in paradise" (Luke 23. 43).

rest of his life to the less blessed state of having to receive instead of being able to give, while the poor recipients of his wealth are likely to be injured rather than benefited by the sudden acquisition of unearned money: it is useless merely to change the positions of Dives and Lazarus—rational divine love bridges the gulf between the two. Again, courts of justice would cease to have any beneficial influence if the offenders dealt with there could claim to be forgiven their evil deeds “until seventy times seven”. Further, parental love, unless strictly controlled, may do grievous harm, as is shown by the fact that a large proportion of favourite, or only, children become worthless prodigals. Sexual love too, so apt to run to extremes, is such a frequent source of trouble and crime as to justify the sagacious comment,¹ “great spirits and great business do keep out this weak passion. They do best who if they cannot but admit love yet make it keep quarter, and sever it wholly from their serious affairs and actions of life; for if it once check with business, it maketh men that they can be no ways true to their own ends”. Finally, the ghastly war of Christendom proved that the precept of loving and freely forgiving our enemies breaks down hopelessly in face of an arrogant, vindictive, and unscrupulous foe; we have seen that Christ did not practise it during his life of bitter strife and conflict, and that, if the Christian creed be accepted, God himself did not apply this principle in dealing with his naturally hostile human creatures. *All these considerations suggest that reason-controlled love, or love-inspired reason, forms the only suitable dominant guiding principle*, and in fact we shall see later (Chapter X), that this principle—tested and found True, Rational, Universal, and Exalting—is declared in the gospel record to have been the Spirit which “in the beginning”, created and still controls the universe. By imitating and applying this eternal Spirit in all our human affairs, we “do the will of the Father which is in heaven”, and so “enter into his kingdom” (Matt. 7. 21): by exercising this divine rational love in all our thoughts, words, and actions, we “therefore shall be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect” (Matt. 5. 48). This TRUE ideal was expressed in more practical words by a Hebrew prophet whose writings were familiar to Jesus, “He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?” (Micah 6. 8).

¹ Bacon’s Essay on Love.

CHAPTER V

UNIVERSAL

A falsely called "Catholic", i.e. "Universal", faith.

"I AM bound, writing as a Catholic, to define the Catholic position but of course with this proviso, that I do not expect that position to have influence upon those who are not of my communion. The Catholic believes in the immortality of the human soul (and for that matter in the very existence of the human soul), on Authority. He may indeed discover the truth of Immortality by the use of his unaided reason, but in the main he believes it because he is told it is true by the voice of the Church ; which when it defines any one of the comparatively few but tremendous things which it has defined, is for him the voice of God. He is more certain of this than of anything except his own existence. He relies upon that Authority as the saintly old Bible Christian nurse who brought me up relied upon the literal Authority of James I's English Bible. Having concluded by the use of observation and reason that the Church has this supreme power and right to teach, I accept what she teaches and trust her more than I do the evidence of my senses. Whether I can *imagine* the thing believed or not is to me of no intellectual consequence at all. But I repeat, no one who is not a Catholic can be expected even to consider that position. . . . I might add before leaving this point that we Catholics believe our authority to be Divine from observation and reason, because it fits in with every other thing that we know, while others reject what does not fit in with some preconceived theory on cause and effect. It is the old opposition between the Catholic attitude of Faith based upon Reason, and the anti-Catholic attitude of Reason based upon Faith. For our opponents—especially the scientific sceptics—must admit (if they closely analyze their own position) that their supposed certitudes are arrived at by the use of Reason based upon Faith : a blind faith in their particular Philosophy of cause and effect."¹

Here we see plainly how observation and reason can be so warped by child-taught superstition as to mislead even intelligent, educated, religiously disposed minds into idolatrous worship of their Church, into accepting its utterances as the voice of God, and trusting it more than the evidence of their senses : unbiased

¹ *Where are the Dead?* p. 50—the book referred to on p. 71, footnote.

reason rightly applied to correct observations could never lead to such irrational results as these. Before discussing the above quotation it is necessary to explain that it refers throughout to what is commonly called "Roman Catholicism" to distinguish it from the Catholicism of other claimants such as the Anglican bishop (p. 128), who frequently described himself as "a Catholic but not a Roman Catholic": "the scientific sceptic" who recognizes the grain of truth in all religions might indeed be termed "Catholic" more correctly than these bigoted advocates of exclusive and contending Christian Churches. This exponent of the Roman Catholic faith then declares it to be based upon reason—let us therefore follow out his own reasoning in his own words, and see where it leads us.

Why do "Catholics believe their (Church) authority to be Divine"? "Because it fits in with every other thing that they *know*". But how does the Catholic *know* such things as "the immortality of the human soul (and, for that matter the very existence of the human soul)" to be true? "In the main he *believes* it because he is told it is true by the voice of the Church." But why does he "conclude that the Church has supreme power and right to voice such things"? Because "it defines tremendous things with what is for him the voice of God". But why *is* it the voice of God, why *is* it a divine authority? We are back again where we began, and no wiser than when we started, for we have simply travelled in a vicious circle of irrational assertions leading nowhere, we have followed the very same priestly authority which Jesus so aptly styled "blind guides". It all amounts to this, that the Roman Catholic's mind, is from childhood, stuffed full of superstitious *beliefs* and ritual, which he accepts on the authority of the Italian priesthood, and these beliefs are so irrational that the above quoted writer frankly admits, and repeats, "no one who is not a Catholic can be expected even to consider the Catholic position"; in other words he acknowledges that if children could be protected from ecclesiastical influence during their youth, they would never accept such doctrines when they attain to years of discretion, though surely if based on reason this faith should make a strong appeal to unbiased rational minds.

There seems to be only one clear way out of all wrangling Christian sectarianism: it ought to be self-evident that any Church claiming power and right to teach in the name of Jesus Christ, as all Christian Churches profess to do, *must recognize his supreme authority, and his alone*, otherwise Christ becomes divided, and there can then be no Catholic (universal) Christian Church at all. But we have seen (p. 131), that Jesus himself drew a sharp distinction between acceptance of his teaching, which he said even a child could understand without the aid of any priestly authority, and, on the other hand, the worship of his person as Christ, which he repudiated on several occasions. It has been pointed out that the

gospel he preached is inherently True, Rational, Universally acceptable, and Exalting beyond measure, showing its spiritual nature by its spiritual fruits of love, joy, peace; etc., but that, on the contrary, the claim to personal divinity—made chiefly, if not altogether, by his apostles and Paul and early church scribes after his death—is associated with false promises, most incredible miracles, gross superstition, and endless debasing ecclesiastical errors, leading to perpetual strife and other lamentable evils. As all this Christian falsehood has been to some extent exposed already it must now be shown that these errors and their consequent evils reach their maximum in the Roman Catholic Church, and that the main articles of its faith and its highly popular idolatrous ritual in no way “fit in with”, and are in fact directly opposed at all points to, the TRUE gospel of God preached by Jesus, the supreme, the only reliable authority in this matter, whose decision must be final.

The immediate cause of these errors and evils is well described by Paul who was so largely responsible for starting them: he says (1 Tim. 6. 10): “the love of money is the root of all evil,” and it certainly is so in this case, for if Roman Catholics “closely analyze their own position” they must admit that the sowing of popular superstitious things by their avaricious Church yields such a plentiful harvest of “carnal things” (1 Cor. 9. 11) as to make it the wealthiest institution in the world; but Jesus denounced all such priestly impositions unsparingly (Matt. 23. 4), and charged his own apostles accordingly, “Freely ye received, freely give. Get you no gold, nor silver, nor brass, in your purses” (Matt. 10. 9).

Further, the writer of the above profession of faith has written a life of an eminent French cardinal, censuring him for not crushing the Huguenots when they were in his power, and for being the means of saving German Protestantism from extermination by ruthless persecution, while in the same book the ghastly work of the Holy [sic] Inquisition in Spain is commended because it effectually repressed all “unhappy divisions”, or in other words all freedom of thought and action. The following extracts from an article written by a Roman Catholic priest on the infamous Spanish inquisitor-general, Torquemada¹ may show what the “divine authority” of the Roman Catholic Church teaches its bond slaves to approve. “During the eighteen years that Torquemada was inquisitor-general it is said that he burnt 10,220 persons, condemned 6,860 others to be burnt in effigy, and reconciled 97,321, thus making an average of some 6,000 convictions a year. These figures are given by Llorente who was secretary of the Holy Office from 1790 to 1792, and had access to the archives; but modern research reduces the list of those burnt by Torquemada to 2,000, in itself an awful holocaust to the principle of intolerance. . . . The sovereigns

¹ *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 11th ed., vol. XXVII, p. 59.

(Ferdinand and Queen Isabella) saw the stream of money, which they had hoped for, diverted to the coffers of the Holy Office, and made complaint to the pope, but Torquemada was powerful enough to secure most of the money for the expenses of the Inquisition. When the sovereigns again complained that the inquisitors were disposing of the property of the condemned and thus depriving the public revenues of considerable sums, Alexander VI appointed Jimenes to examine into the case and *make the Holy Office disgorge the plunder*". Later on Torquemada got a decree issued "ordering every Jew either to embrace Christianity or to leave the country", with the result that, at the lower estimate stated, 800,000 families of Jews were expelled, most of their goods falling into the hands of the Inquisition. The Roman Catholic writer of the article, with his tongue bulging through his cheek, concludes it thus: "The name of Torquemada stands for all that is intolerant and narrow, despotic and cruel. He was no minister of the Gospel, but a blind fanatic, who failed to see that faith which is the gift of God cannot be imposed on any conscience by force." If this were the teaching of the Church of Rome why did it institute the Inquisition and permit this particular agent to practise such barbarities for eighteen years, in fact until he died, "full of years and merit" according to his biographer? Certainly Torquemada "was no minister of the Gospel" of love and peace preached by Jesus, but he *was* a minister of the "Church militant" which has always repudiated that gospel, and accordingly when he violated it by "taking the sword" against the Moors, "he obtained from the Holy See the same spiritual favours that had been enjoyed by the Crusaders". If there be a future judgment of eternal torture in accordance with the Christian's accepted book of divine Revelation, then there is no need to anticipate it by an Inquisition here, unless it may be to exemplify the principle of the parable, that positions are to be reversed in the next world (Luke 16. 25), so that there the agents of the Church of Rome who practised, or who still defend, its Inquisition methods may be tormented for ever in hell, and their burnt and tortured victims be comforted for ever in Abraham's bosom. If those who claim to have prophesied and cast out devils in Christ's name, are condemned by Jesus (Matt. 7. 22, 23), then it seems that the Church which pleads, "Lord, Lord, have we not robbed by thy name, and by thy name persecuted most diabolically, and by thy name murdered wholesale", may hear the voice of its man god saying: "I never knew you, depart from me ye that work iniquity." One thing is certain, those, be they popes, priests or laymen, who approve of such methods are not disciples of Jesus, for he distinctly stated: "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another:" that was *his* suggested, *but as yet untried*, method for quelling "unhappy divisions", for effecting religious unison, for establishing true, all-embracing Catholicism.

In the next place the chapter heading reference to "our opponents the scientific sceptics" and their "supposed certitudes", suggests that we should examine the hostile attitude of the Church of Rome towards scientific revealers of truth—particularly whether this Church is justified in claiming it can "define tremendous things with the voice of God", and consequently "has the supreme power and right to teach", anything at all apparently, imprisoning, plundering, torturing, and killing all dissentients—and that we should submit the issue to Jesus, the sole arbitrator, for final judgment. We shall take for our purpose the following well-known test case, because its details are thoroughly established and will be seen presently (p. 161) to possess a very special significance that can scarcely be questioned.

Early in the seventeenth century the Italian astronomer Galileo, having constructed a satisfactory telescope, was able by its means to obtain strong proofs concerning the movements of the earth and planets in regard to the sun as described by Copernicus, but the ecclesiastical authorities pronounced this system of the universe to be "absurd in philosophy and formally heretical because expressly contrary to holy scripture", and Galileo was "by command of the pope (Paul V) officially admonished not to 'hold, teach, or defend' the condemned doctrines". Sixteen years later, however, misled by the exceptionally favourable attitude of his great friend and admirer the new pope (Urban VIII), Galileo published, in dialogue form, a very remarkable defence of the Copernican system, with the result that he was haled before the Inquisition, examined under threat of torture, compelled to abjure publicly on his knees the doctrine which he had taught, his Dialogue was prohibited, and he himself was condemned, as "vehemently suspected of heresy", to incarceration at the pleasure of the tribunal—which last item, in deference to his great influence and advanced age, took the form of strict seclusion in his villa outside Florence for the rest of his life.

In the present more enlightened days it may be stated, without fear of contradiction even by the Church of Rome, that the movements of the earth and planets described by Galileo, and pronounced "absurd" by the Catholic theologians of his time, are now so well known that they form the basis of innumerable accurate astronomical predictions and "fit in with every other thing we know" in astronomy and the evolution of the universe; like most "supposed certitudes of science" they have been proved—by the use of reason based on reliable observations—to be indubitable facts, are relied upon in navigation and recognized by everyone except those who "trust the Church more than the evidence of their senses". This Church tries to repudiate responsibility for its former rejection of this scientific truth on the mere quibble that there was no official confirmation by the pope, but the facts speak for themselves. Galileo personally stated the

scientific case before "the entire pontifical court" at the headquarters of Catholicism in Rome, during December, 1615: "the consulting theologians of the Holy Office" considered the matter for two months; and then pronounced their "absurd" verdict as quoted above on February 24th, 1616; the pope at once accepted this judgment, for two days later Galileo received from Cardinal Bellarmín the official admonition, *by papal command*, to have nothing more to do with the condemned doctrine. This deliberate judgment of the Holy Office, put into practical execution by the pope himself, committed the Church of Rome to the rejection of the Copernican system, and as a consequence an edict to this effect was issued by the congregation of the Index a week later (March 5th, 1616).¹ So, too, sixteen years later "the accusation against Galileo was that he had written in contravention of the decree of 1616, and in defiance of the command of the Holy Office"; the two-fold statement is significant, for if the decree could be repudiated as the unconfirmed work of a disciplinary congregation, the "command of the Holy Office" had been voiced by the previous pope himself, thereby receiving the approval of the highest authority in the Church of Rome, against which Galileo could make no appeal.

If all this did not "represent the Church", did not constitute "the voice of the Church", then what, and where, was this voice, and why was it silent? Why did it miss this splendid opportunity to decide the truth in regard to this tremendous question of the order of the Universe, with all its highly important practical side issues? Why did it not protect a devoted son of the Church—Galileo was educated in a monastery, was praised by the pope for his "exemplary piety", and brought up his only two daughters to be "brides of the Church"—from threats of torture, from public humiliation, from forced disavowal of truth, from unjust imprisonment and unmerited penance? Why did this hypothetical voice neither warn the consulting theologians of the Vatican that they were deciding falsely, nor warn the pope that he was enforcing a falsehood, nor warn the congregation of the Index that their edict, prohibiting the spread of scientific truth, was a disgraceful error, which would have to be revoked sooner or later? As the *Historian's History* states:² "The ecclesiastical authorities having once declared the doctrine of the earth's motion to be contrary to scripture and heretical, long adhered in form to this declaration, and did not allow the Copernican system to be taught in any other way than as an 'hypothesis'—in fact

¹ These facts are perhaps still more convincing because taken almost word for word from an article which contains the following pro-Catholic plea: "This edict it is essential to observe, the responsibility for which rests with a disciplinary congregation, in no sense representing the church, was never confirmed by the pope, and was virtually repealed in 1757 under Benedict XIV—Art. "Galileo". *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 11th ed.

² Vol. IX., p. 495.

the condemnatory decree was only 'virtually repealed' 140 years later. It seems a matter of comparatively little importance whether the Church of Rome maintained a culpable official silence, thereby passively allowing its emissaries to flout truth, repress scientific knowledge, and cruelly persecute an innocent victim, or whether, as all the facts indicate, it pronounced a deliberate and entirely false judgment, authorizing and actively enforcing these errors, for in either case this Church cannot repudiate responsibility. It cannot be denied that the highest authorities at the headquarters of Catholicism in Rome were all actively concerned in the deliberate rejection of a vastly important scientific truth, did all in their power to suppress it, and persecuted its chief exponent, forcing him to abjure a 'scientific certitude' that the Church itself cannot but admit is undoubtedly true: consequently the proper answer to all the above questions is, simply, that this Church most certainly did not then possess any power of 'defining tremendous things' with an infallibility entitling it to be considered as representing 'the voice of God'."

This inevitable conclusion from the above facts is in reality the verdict pronounced by the only supreme Christian authority, in a closely similar case of persecution for truth, recorded in John 8. 12 to end of chapter: Jesus there proves in biting irrevocable words that those who persecute the revealers of truth, neither represent God, nor have any affinity with him, neither speak with his voice nor even hear his words, but on the contrary are affiliated with the powers of evil and falsehood. This conclusion is very convincingly confirmed by the complete identity that exists in the most essential elements of these two cases of persecution for truth, as described by Jesus himself (John 8. 40), "Now ye seek to kill me—a man that hath told you the truth—which I heard from God." No Christian doubts the truth of this threefold statement as applied to Jesus, and it is only necessary to repeat here (p. 56) that Buddha, Jesus and Mohammed—and indeed all other truth-revealers (p. 233)—discovered the truth by applying their godlike powers of reason, directly or indirectly, to observations of nature; in this way they "heard it from God". And assuredly this triple retort by Jesus applies word for word in Galileo's case: his accusers "sought to kill him" and if he had not recanted would most certainly have burnt him at the stake, as they did countless other innocent victims; he "told them the truth"—even the Church which accused and condemned him can no longer deny that his doctrine was true; and if he did not "hear his truth from God", from whom else did he learn it? "The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament sheweth his handiwork," cried the Psalmist as he gazed enraptured on the spectacle with his unaided sight, and it was on the scroll of these same heavens that Galileo, looking through the first astronomical telescope ever used by man, deciphered the truth traced by the very finger of

God himself. As the glorious orb of Jupiter appeared in his field of vision, attended by its satellites, whose stately procession round the planet he was able to follow night after night in the clear Italian sky, is it any wonder that he stood entranced with what seemed to him—nay, which actually was, and is—God's own model of the solar system, and of all other systems constituting the entire Universe? When therefore the Church of Rome rejected Galileo's heavenly vision, and repudiated his God-sent message of truth, it proved clearly and for all time, that it has no divine authority and supreme right to teach true doctrine, has not even the capacity to recognize truth when revealed, or, in the words of Jesus (John 8. 47), it "hears not the words of God because it is not of God".

And further when its authorized agents persecuted and threatened to torture the messenger of truth—would they have seared with heated irons the eyes that had seen "the glory of God", and torn out the tongue that proclaimed God's truth?—then once more it becomes evident that the Church which could act in this way, and which has never repented its wickedness but is obviously prepared to repeat it if possible, fully deserves the terrible denunciation contained in verse 44, quite as much as did those Jews to whom, being in like case, these words were addressed by the real supreme Christian authority. *As long as this Church maintains the fiction of its infallibility it cannot consistently renounce the unrelenting opposition to scientific truth which is displayed in Galileo's case and in our chapter heading, and as Jesus certainly made no artificial distinction between scientific truth and religious truth, it follows inevitably that his sentence of excommunication, pronounced against all those who persecute revealers of truth, is applicable in every detail to this apostate Church—it opposes divine truth, therefore it is "not of God."*

If all this is not sufficient to convince even the Church-bred mind of the truth of this decision, then let us pursue the comparison further. The incident where Jesus vindicated truth and its revealers closes with the statement (v. 59), that the Jews tried to stone him, and thus silenced him temporarily by compelling him to hide and flee out of the temple, just as the Holy Office forced Galileo into silence for sixteen years; later on, both were tried, both convicted, both sentenced, both alike on charges of heresy, brought against them in both instances by the chief priests of the orthodox religious creed, in both cases at its headquarters in the metropolis. In this way the Jewish priests succeeded in stilling for ever the voice which had uttered such "gracious words" of love, not threats of torture—of "truth that makes men free" (v. 32), not false doctrines that make men bond-slaves of the Church; and so too, Galileo was silenced by his priestly persecutors for the rest of his life, but only after he also had given his message of truth to the world. Even then the close resemblance between these two cases of vindictive priestcraft did not cease with the

deaths of the victims, for in both instances the Church continued to persecute the truth for which these men had suffered, long afterwards. As regards Galileo's truth, in so far as it is for ever inscribed on the starry heavens, even "the representatives of God on earth" could not prevent its being "known and read of all men" by means of telescopes constructed after Galileo's model; but as regards its earthly record, embodied in Galileo's famous printed "Dialogue", this was within the ecclesiastical jurisdiction, and so, though "greeted by a tumult of applause from every part of Europe", it was condemned by the Church of Rome some months after publication, and its sale strictly prohibited—such was the summary treatment accorded by this "divine authority" to the wonderful legacy of truth bequeathed to the world by Galileo. In the case of Jesus there can be no doubt that if he had written his TRUE "gospel of the kingdom of heaven", and this most precious document had been found and published after the Church of Rome had usurped power to propagate its false creed by violence and cunning, it too would have been banned exactly as was Galileo's printed truth, simply because the spread of truth from every source is antagonistic to the gross superstition and idolatrous worship by which this Church bears rule and waxes fat: this is by no means a mere assumption, for just one hundred years before Galileo's time the Church was actually faced with this very problem of how to treat such a printed gospel, and here is what happened.¹

The book was the first printed English version of the New Testament, of which thousands of smuggled copies were seized and burned at the old Paul's cross by order of the Church, as "a burnt offering most pleasing to Almighty God".² The human victim in this case was William Tyndale, who devoted his heroic life to the task of translating, printing, and distributing the scriptures, as the surest means of spreading the true teaching of Jesus throughout England, and thus exposing the utter corruption of the Church. "He argued with the priests, and one day, startled all around by his memorable declaration, 'We had better', said his opponent, 'be without God's laws than the Pope's.' And Tyndale rose in his indignant wrath. 'I defy the Pope,' he cried, 'and all his laws; and if God spare me I will one day make the boy that drives the plough in England to know more of scripture than the Pope does.'" And the Church knowing this full well, dreading exposure, and fearing the loss of all its wealth and power, drove Tyndale out of England, and chased him from place to place in Germany, where eventually he succeeded in his task: about 15,000 copies of the New Testament were issued within four years, and despatched to England hidden in all sorts of

¹ A very vivid description of this historical episode is given in Archdeacon J. P. Smyth's delightfully written and most instructive little book, *How We got Our Bible*, from which the above details are taken.

² Cardinal Campeggio's letter to Wolsey.

merchandise, and thus, in spite of the utmost vigilance in watching the ports, they poured into the country, to the utter dismay of the hostile clergy. The bishop of London bought them wholesale in order to burn them, thereby inadvertently supplying Tyndale with the money necessary to produce them in still larger numbers. The friars railed at them from the pulpit, and even the famous Sir Thomas More attacked the translation fiercely, though his sweeping charges against it were refuted by Tyndale, and narrowed down to a few mistranslated words. Not king, nor pope, nor chancellor could prevent its being everywhere received and eagerly read. "It passeth my power," writes bishop Nikke, complaining to the primate, "it passeth my power, or that of any spiritual man to hinder it now, and *if this continue much longer it will undo us all.*" But although his enemies could no longer frustrate the effects of Tyndale's work, they could still wreak their vengeance on the workman: unable to entice him back to England by promises of safety—since, as he said, "the bishops believe that no faith should be kept with heretics"—they employed "a treacherous villain named Phillips, a clergyman of very plausible manners, to win the confidence of the unsuspecting exile", and then betray him. Tyndale treated him as a friend and lent him money when he wanted it, with the result that this Judas Iscariot decoyed him into the hands of accomplices who hurried him to the dungeons of the Castle of Vilvorden, where he was kept in "cold and misery and rags", until finally he was strangled at the stake and then burnt to ashes. Thus we see how the leaders of this Church acted precisely as did the Jewish priests, who first rejected the teaching of Jesus on their own behalf, and then persecuted the messenger of truth in order to prevent its dissemination to others (Matt. 23. 13): the message was the same in both cases, being in one instance the spoken, in the other, the printed, teaching of Jesus; the result was the same, for in each case the messenger was betrayed to a violent death; the culprits too were the same, being in both instances an arrogant mercenary priesthood, and so once more the sentence of excommunication pronounced on the one must be merited by the other—"ye have murdered the bearer of God's word of truth; ye are outcast of God"!

In order to make quite sure that this terrible condemnation pronounced by Jesus (John 8. 44-47) is as applicable to the adherents of the Church of Rome as to the apostate Jews, it is necessary to shew that they are in exactly the same position as regards all matters for which Jesus specially censured the treasury Pharisees. By carefully reading John 8. 12 to end, and keeping the Bible open at this chapter for reference, it will be seen that Jesus here scathingly condemned the Jewish ecclesiastical system—and by inference all other systems cast in the same mould—as in no way TRUE: *he actually applied this fourfold test throughout, so that all the essential points in the following fourfold argument*

are provided by Jesus himself, being largely in the exact letter, and wholly in the spirit, of the word of truth delivered by him on that and other occasions.

TRUE

(John 8. 12-32)

Throughout the whole of this record Jesus defended his truth. He proclaimed that it was a light come from God—that God had sent him into the world to preach this truth—that he accordingly had told it to these Jews—that he assured them repeatedly they would die in their sins, in spite of all their orthodox temple worship in which they were then engaged, unless they accepted this truth, for it alone could make them free—that this salvation, being a free gift from God who “loved mercy and not sacrifice”, had no place in religious systems of sacrificial atonement, priestly ritual, and treasury offerings—that this salvation was not a matter of faith either in ordinances attributed to Jehovah, or in their father Abraham, or in the person of Jesus himself, but consisted in abiding in his word, thus becoming truly his disciples, following his example by doing always what was pleasing to the heavenly Father, especially by loving him and loving each other, and so attaining the perfection necessary for admission into “the kingdom of heaven”—that this truth had existed long before Abraham, in fact ever since man became a living soul anxious to learn and to do the will of God—and, generally, that this everlasting truth is indeed in all respects TRUE, divinely True, being of God himself, so Rational that even babes could understand it, Universally applicable to Jew and Gentile alike, and capable of Exalting frail and sinful men into sons of God, thus transforming this erring world into a veritable kingdom of heaven.

It is stated (v. 30) that these Jews believed *on him*, meaning that they thought him the promised Messiah come to “restore the kingdom to Israel”, while the Church of Rome likewise believes *on him*, meaning however the crucified and risen Christ sitting on a heavenly throne, inviting all submissive Roman Catholics to “inherit the kingdom prepared for them”, sending refractory ones to purgatory, and all heretics to “the eternal fire, which is prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matt. 25. 31-41); but Jesus rejected such professions of belief in his person, and required instead compliance with his word (v. 31). This TRUE word of Jesus outlined above was regarded by him as all-sufficient, perfect in every detail, and so he tells his hearers it would “make them free” (v. 32) from all ecclesiastical “burdens heavy and grievous to be borne, laid on men’s shoulders” by their leaders (Matt. 23. 4), such as also the Church of Rome claims the “supreme power and right” to impose on its credulous adherents, and even to force on the world by violence.

The following enumeration of some of the most important items of faith exacted by this Church should expose how completely the unending accumulation of Church-made doctrines and false traditions has "made void the word of God" taught by Jesus. Faith in a personal sacrifice-exacting god; faith in an incomprehensible trinity, plus the "queen of heaven", and in her immaculate conception; faith in a fairy heaven, a fiery hell, and a fabulous purgatory; faith in Christ's resurrection and ascension myths, and innumerable miracles both biblical and ecclesiastical; faith in angels, saints and relics; faith in evil spirits, witches and sorcery, and the power of the Roman Catholic Church in relation thereto; faith in papal infallibility and in the "divine authority" of a Church which opposes scientific truth, and propagates superstitious error by persecution and priestcraft; faith in rites and sacraments borrowed from heathen sources; faith in the Church as the hereditary custodian of "the keys of heaven"; faith in priestly confession, penance, and absolution; faith in purchasing the free gift of God by offerings and bequests to the Church; faith in masses for the dead; faith in the divine inspiration of selected but still unreliable Jewish and Christian records; and generally speaking faith in official articles of belief or creeds, which, as in the case of the "Apostles' creed", are more concerned with the worship of the miracle-worker Christ than with the gospel of the only true God preached by Jesus. Of books dealing with all this theological lumber there is no end; whole libraries of dusty tomes have been devoted to defending these false doctrines, and every volume is a mute reproachful witness of the fact that the simple teaching of Jesus has been "hidden from the wise and understanding". There is plainly no escape from the fundamental fact that the word of truth spoken by Jesus was most positively stated by him to suffice for the salvation of these Jews and their contemporaries—who could not at that time have known anything of the "atonement on the cross", the resurrection, ascension, and second advent legends, nor of the endless rites, dogmas, sacraments, creeds, etc., elaborated by the Churches of later date—*therefore all these apostolic, Pauline, or ecclesiastical impositions are not only superfluous, but are galling fetters to be carefully avoided by those who desire the truth that makes men free* (v. 32).

Evidently then the "truth heard from God" (v. 40) is altogether at variance not only with the Jewish religion as shown by Jesus, but also with the essential doctrines of the Christian faith, particularly as set forth by those who usurp the title "Catholic"; this indeed could not be otherwise seeing that the Pharisee Paul modelled the whole system of ecclesiastical Christology on his own Jewish ideas of religion, of priestly ritual and sacrificial atonement, which "had no place" in the true word of Jesus (v. 37), consequently the condemnation by the Supreme Christian authority must of necessity apply to both these false

ritualistic faiths—to both alike he thunders, “ye are not of God” (v. 47).

RATIONAL

(John 8. 31-40)

In the second section of this gospel extract Jesus states definitely (v. 31) that the real test of discipleship in his own case consists not in a mere declaration of faith in his person, but in imitating his example by carrying out his word, and he reasons from this as from a general principle applicable in all such cases. Thus he applied it to the Jews, who claimed to be God’s specially “chosen people” and heirs to the promise given to their father Abraham, merely on the strength of their personal descent from him; but Jesus proved to them very plainly that this assumption was quite false; and we propose to show that he would have extended this decision to the exactly parallel case of the Church of Rome, which claims pre-eminence through inheriting “apostolic succession” from Peter, together with the divine authority attributed to him in a spurious passage (p. 106) in Matthew’s gospel (Chap. 16. 19). This claim is clearly untenable, for Peter himself was not credited with any such divine prerogative by the primitive Christians, and when the inevitable schisms occurred, he neither claimed nor exercised “the supreme power and right to teach” and decide by virtue of being an infallible mouthpiece, the very voice of God; he was only leader of one faction, some being “of Paul, some of Apollos, some of Peter, and some of Christ” (1 Cor. 1. 12). Indeed on one important occasion “when there had been much questioning”, this first Church-accredited “representative of God on earth” merely acted as a prominent advocate on one side, while James assumed the supreme authority, prefacing his decision with the words “Wherefore my judgment is”, etc. (Acts 15. 5-19). Moreover Paul, who was the “least of the apostles, not meet to be called an apostle” (1 Cor. 15. 9), had no hesitation in “resisting Peter to the face because he stood condemned” (Gal. 2. 11). Finally it is on incontrovertible biblical record that both Peter and Paul grievously misled the entire early Church by their fervent preaching of the immediate second coming of Christ. Observation and reason then assure us that *neither Peter, nor Paul, nor the early Church of apostolic days possessed any divine infallible authority, consequently the Church of Rome cannot have inherited from them a prerogative which never existed.*

And common sense confirms observation and reason in this respect. Imagination fails us if we try to picture the President of the Royal Society convening a meeting of its Fellows, gravely announcing to them that in virtue of his high office and illustrious predecessors he is the infallible referee in all vexed questions of science, that his decision on all such matters is finally and for ever binding on the whole scientific world—and actually, succeeding

in getting them to pass a majority vote accordingly. If he crowned his folly by declaring solemnly that scientific observers must renounce the evidence of their senses and trust to faith, that scientific reason and its "supposed certitudes" were altogether fallacious, and that in reality the universe is directed along most erratic and supernatural lines miraculously revealed to His Sapience the President of the Royal Society—it cannot be doubted that he would then be quietly requested to vacate his chair forthwith, and accommodation would be found for him elsewhere: one can only wonder why the Christian world did not, in the first instance, take such action under precisely similar circumstances. Incidentally it may be added that the early Church never dared to elect a supreme head with the title of "pope", that is "father", in defiance of the direct command of Jesus, "Call no man your father on the earth; for one is your Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 23. 9); yet even the rank and file of the Roman priesthood assume this title, frequently coupled with the adjective 'holy', though only on one very solemn occasion (John 17. 11) did Jesus qualify God's exclusive title in this way.

But let us as usual refer the matter to Jesus, and see whether he confirms the above conclusion from our observation and reason: "I know that ye are Abraham's seed," he said to the Jews (v. 37), and then continues very convincingly (v. 39), but "if ye were Abraham's children ye would do the works of Abraham," who did not persecute a teacher of truth as you Jews are doing. Surely then in like manner he would say to the Church of Rome, "I know that ye are professedly the successors of my apostles, yet all the same if ye were really so, ye would do the works of my apostles," who were sent forth (Matt. 10. 5-10) in their every-day clothes to preach freely the one "tremendous thing" Jesus had taught them, to let the light of the kingdom of heaven so shine in their thoughts, words, and actions as to bring strength and comfort to the afflicted in mind and body, and thus cause all men "to glorify the Father which is in heaven": *if the Church of Rome desires to obtain true "apostolic succession" it must "go and do likewise"* (Luke 10. 37). It must first leave all its "vast possessions" (Mark 10. 21, 22)—amassed through the blood and tears of centuries—as the apostles had "to leave all and follow Jesus": it must not accept the precepts or doctrines of any so-called "holy father", but like the apostles must first sit at the feet of him who was "meek and lowly in heart" and learn only from him; it must renounce all claim to divine authority, and consequently to the "supreme power and right to teach" anything, except just what the disciples had "heard in the ear" (Matt. 10. 27) from Jesus before he made them apostles, "sent forth"¹ to preach his simple gospel.

¹The word 'apōstle' means literally "one sent away" on a special mission.

These are the "commands" issued by Jesus (Matt. II. 1), and having stated above, in accordance with his own words, what his gospel was, let us emphasize this by making clear what it was not. Jesus did not teach his apostles the pagan idea that their heavenly Father was so enraged with the faults of his frail human creatures that his wrath could only be appeased by the cruel sacrifice of an innocent victim, consequently, *however astonishing it may appear, these apostles, when first sent out to evangelize, had heard nothing, knew nothing, preached nothing concerning either a crucified saviour, or his miraculous resurrection, or his ascension into heaven—if salvation depends on such knowledge then the apostles were at that time even as the heathen around them.* They had not been baptized, nor confirmed, nor ordained by Jesus, who cared for none of these things: neither had he taught them anything about sacraments, nor transubstantiation, nor the doctrine of the incomprehensible trinity, nor the immaculate conception of the virgin Mary, nor of ecclesiastical infallibility, in fact the Church of Rome would have anathematized them on a great many matters of faith (p. 166). Jesus did not instruct them to hear confessions and grant absolutions, to celebrate marriage ceremonies or funeral rites, to repeat masses for the souls of the dead, or to perform any such function in his name or God's name, even gratis, much less in return for "the gold or silver or brass" which he forbade them to get. Lastly and most particularly, in his whole gospel of love Jesus never uttered one word authorizing his apostles, or the Church of Rome, or anyone on earth, to torture, maim, imprison, pillage, banish, strangle, or burn alive, even those who deliberately rejected his divine truth, let alone those whose only offence was to disagree with mere ecclesiastical pronouncements on scientific questions and on uncertain matters of faith.¹ *It is quite certain then that Jesus himself preached, and taught his apostles to preach, a "gospel of God" entirely free from all this false and burdensome ecclesiasticism.*

¹ It is interesting to observe the effects of persecution on the lives of those mentioned above: Abraham, under threat of death, hed most disgracefully on two occasions (Gen. xii and xx), and thus, notwithstanding his capricious god's disapproval, saved his life, reaped rich immediate rewards, became the father of these apostate Jews, and, according to the parable, in spite of Christ's teaching (Mark 10. 23-25) this wealthy man was able to get to heaven and jeer at his less fortunate fellow (Matt. 16. 25). Peter, the privileged disciple of Jesus, under fear of sharing his master's arrest and condemnation, denied him thrice with oaths and curses, and so survived to become the patron saint of the apostate Church of Rome, and the traditional gatekeeper of heaven. Galileo the lifelong bond slave of this Church, in his extreme old age, and under dire threat of torture, secured a few more years of "labour and sorrow" and blindness, by renouncing scientific truth, which however ultimately prevailed over ecclesiastical hostility. The persecution of Christ led to his tragic death and to all the associated ecclesiastical superstitions and errors that have filled Christendom ever since with strife and violence, in contrast with the true gospel of love preached by Jesus during his lifetime.

When therefore the Church of Rome—urging an invalid claim to divine authority through inheritance from its patron saint, Peter—usurps “supreme power and right to teach” all the above “traditions that make void the word of God” preached by Jesus, and endeavours to force these on the world by priestcraft and violence, then the only reasonable conclusion is that this Church, and all who support it, occupy exactly the same position as the apostate Jews, who, while invoking the name of their father Abraham, persecuted Jesus for denouncing their same false sacrificial ideas, their same oppressive ritualism, and their same opposition to truth and truth revealers—consequently the supreme Christian authority must pronounce on both alike the same denunciation and dread sentence of excommunication contained in verses 44 and 47.

UNIVERSAL

(John 8. 41-43)

In the next two verses of this chapter, Jesus points out that though God is the universal Father, yet this relationship can be severed by those who fail to do his will. The Jews and the Church of Rome began by professing belief in the Christ while ignoring the teaching of Jesus, then they pinned their faith on their patron saints, and both these claims being rejected by the supreme Christian authority they are compelled as a last resource to usurp “divine authority” derived from God himself. But when the Jews “said unto him” (v. 41), “we have one Father, even God”, Jesus—having just stated twice (vs. 37, 40) that they were seeking to kill him because his truth opposed their sham religion—replied with the conclusive argument, “If God were your Father ye would love me, for I came forth and am come from God” (v. 42); this observation and reason being quite unanswerable he then dealt them his final crushing blow (vs. 44, 47). And surely this applies likewise to the same presumptuous claim advanced by the Church of Rome in the words of its above-quoted mouthpiece, “we Catholics believe our authority to be Divine from observations and reason, because it fits in with every other thing that we know”: we have seen already that it does not in the least “fit in with” the truth taught by Jesus, which therefore must be something that Catholics do *not* know, in which again they resemble these Jews, who could not hear or understand the words of Jesus (v. 43); and now we can apply this other very simple test of all claims to divinity used by Jesus himself, who, as was his wont, dealt with the subtleties of theology in a refreshingly plain straightforward way. “*If God were your Father,*” he said to the Jews, and to the Catholic Church, and to all who claim divine authority, “*ye would love me*, for I am come from God”: according to Jesus then, the one “tremendous thing” that the Church of Rome must define in order to establish its claim

is merely the answer to the childish question, "Does it love Jesus?" and it is quite unable to reply to that apparently simple enquiry without acknowledging that it has no "supreme power and right to teach" its own decisions as infallible doctrines. For if this Church says it does not love Jesus, then, as he argued in the case of the Jews, its teaching is opposed to his,¹ which is from God, and certainly no divine authority has any right to teach what is contrary to God's truth (v. 40). On the other hand if it says it does love Jesus, then it must accept only his TRUE word (v. 31), certified by him to be complete and reliable (Matt. 7. 24), to be simple enough for a child to understand (Matt. 11. 25), and above all to be "truth he heard from God" (v. 40); consequently for all these reasons he himself maintained that it is on no account to be supplemented by mere "precepts of men taught as doctrine" (Matt. 15. 9), particularly what might be termed contra-natural precepts of a highly controversial and unprofitable nature (p. 166).

But the meaning to be attached to this crucial test is not quite so simple as it appears, for in the very next verse (v. 43) Jesus cries out in despair that he cannot make these Jews understand his words. As regards the all-essential idea of "loving him" this misunderstanding has always persisted throughout Christendom, even to the present day, and it arises through interpreting this fourth gospel according to its false interpolated explanation (p. 122) instead of following the directions of Jesus (pp. 123, 124), to apply his words spiritually, not personally. Usually a Christian preacher or teacher who employs this much abused expression "loving Jesus", means thereby devotion to a more or less divine being in the person of a young Jew, generally figured nearly naked, crowned with thorns, and attached to a cross as a voluntary offering to God for our sins; probably nine-tenths (see questionnaire figures, p. 68) of those who "profess and call themselves Christians" would accept this statement, and it would be endorsed by the whole Catholic Church, which is unanimously addicted to the idolatrous worship of this figure, and even of its graven image. Yet it is of course an obvious matter of fact that at the time Jesus uttered these words he could not possibly have expected these Jews to love him as their crucified Saviour, nor to love him personally at all, seeing they were merely casual auditors of his by no means love-inspiring discourse (v. 12 onwards), in which he had thrice warned them of their sinful state, had firmly rejected them as his disciples, and had scorned their most cherished religious beliefs. Both they and their Christ-worshipping successors, particularly the grossly Christolatrous Church of Rome, are alike fallen into the old, old, universal, pagan error of personifying the spiritual, by their failure to understand that when Jesus used the words "love me" he meant not a mere sentimental attachment to his bodily presence

¹ See Anglo-Catholic representative's admission (p. 129).

or form, expending itself in devotional exercises and idolatrous worship, but complete sympathy with his spiritual being, his thoughts and ideas, represented by his message from God, requiring men to do God's will and so qualify for admission into "the kingdom of heaven". As we have already seen, all through this gospel Jesus refers to himself only as the mouthpiece of God's word of truth, but in spite of this "many believed *on him*" (v. 30), and so we read (v. 31), "Jesus *therefore* said to those Jews," and undoubtedly to all other worshippers of his person, "If ye abide *in my word*, then are ye truly my disciples"—in other words, belief in him personally is useless, compliance with his divine message of truth being all essential. Truth which replaces patron saints by the heavenly Father (v. 38), truth which "makes men free indeed" (vs. 32, 36) from all ecclesiastical burdens, yet constrains them like Jesus himself "to do always the things that please this Father" (v. 29), truth which saves them from "dying in their sins" (v. 24) by giving them "the light of life" eternal (v. 12), truth testifying itself and testified by Jesus (vs. 14-19) to be of God, such truth is indeed divine, and the sure test of divine things, so that whatever claims divine authority must "fit in with", and be completely imbued with, this sublime truth, which pervades the whole of this discourse, and the entire spiritual teaching of Jesus. Thus at last we can fully understand the real meaning of the words (v. 42), "If God were your Father, ye would love", not "me" personally, but, "that which came forth from God" even "the truth which I heard from God" (v. 40), or as Jesus expresses it quite impersonally later on (v. 47), "He that is of God, heareth the words of God."

Both the Jews and the Church of Rome definitely claim to be of God, but they cannot stand this test proposed by Jesus, the test of loving God's word, of hearing and understanding God's word, above all of doing God's word. The Jews failed for the two reasons mentioned by Jesus (v. 43), they could neither "hear his words" nor "understand his speech". They could not "hear his words" because their ears were attuned to a false creed, heathen ritual, and obsolete moral code; moreover they finally became so exasperated that they declined to listen further, and drove Jesus out of the temple—the usual ending to Christian controversy. They could not "understand his speech", and this was the case all through to the tragic end, when they finally accused him of "making himself a king" (John 19. 12) in opposition to Cæsar: but "Jesus answered, my kingdom is not of this world" (Chap. 18. 36), if it were, he continues, in words so applicable to the Church of Rome, "then would my servants fight" for temporal power, but Jesus knows nothing of "churches militant here on earth" clamouring for regal pomp and power in his name. "My kingdom," he repeats, "is not from hence;" and when Pilate persists "Art thou a king then?" Jesus answers with sublime dignity, "To this end have I been born," not to be a mere earthly deliverer as the Jews

hoped, nor a victim whose agony would appease a wrathful God, as the Christians think, but, "to this end am I come into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice" (John 18. 37). Such very simple truth, yet so completely misunderstood! Neither a king to be crowned, nor a scapegoat to be sacrificed, but a witness of God's eternal truth to be silenced, because opposed to priestly error and orthodox tradition. Hopeless, wilful misunderstanding of his speech, then, and to the present time! For does not all this apply to Christendom ever since, and particularly to the Church of Rome? The adherents of this faith cannot hear the truthful words of Jesus while they are listening for the voice of God (p. 156) in the endless false doctrines (p. 166.) of their Church, which "misunderstands his speech" and so teaches a system that is simply a reproduction of this same pagan sacrificial Jewish creed, the same effete moral code that permits cruel persecution even of truth, and the same travesty of worship by heathen rites.

These errors are propagated on the authority of those who style themselves "holy fathers", "vicars of Christ", and "God's representatives on earth", but we have it on the authority of Jesus that the word of truth he heard from God has no place in the precepts of such "blind guides": *which of these two opposing authorities is divine and worthy of "supreme power and right to teach" the universe?* The Church of Rome by its assumption of the title "Catholic" claims to be "universal", but its antagonist the Church of England likewise professes officially its "belief in the Holy Catholic Church", and of course all earnest believers, in every religious sect throughout the world, think that their own creed is, or ought to be, the one and only universal religion, and they prove this to their own satisfaction by picturing how free the world would be from unhappy religious differences if only all men would see things as they see them. All alike seem unaware that the creed of any individual is almost always determined, not by rational unbiassed consideration of its merits, but by the chances of birth, education, and environment, so that if even the most bigoted leaders, or the most intelligent and devout adherents of any faith, had been born and bred under the influence of some other creed, they would most probably repudiate, and treat with contempt, the ideas that they actually hold as sacred and inviolable. As we are now dealing with the Church of Rome, let us take for example its ardent advocate, quoted at the head of this section, who lets the cat out of the bag by informing us, that he ~~was~~ brought up by a saintly old Bible Christian nurse—but if he had been brought up by an equally saintly old Koran Mohammedan nurse in a Mohammedan country there can be no doubt that he would now be thanking Allah that he was not a Christian "infidel": or suppose he had been reared in the tents of those outcasts of orthodox faiths, his "opponents, the scientific sceptics"

—whose unpardonable sin lies in devoting, and often sacrificing, their lives to ascertaining truth—unquestionably he would reject with scorn his present superstitious beliefs in all the myths, legends, and miracles drilled into his helpless child-mind and fostered by his Church. So great is this accumulation of superstition in the Christian, and more particularly the Roman Catholic, faith, that its own advocate admits “it cannot even be considered” without such perverse preliminary education; indeed those not thus prejudiced have actually endured the most frightful tortures and cruel deaths rather than accept doctrines so false, so irrational, so degrading and so productive of evil. The settled policy of this Church is, by hook or by crook, to enforce universal acceptance of its false, idolatrous, and pitiless faith on a most unwilling world, and with this object in view it has endeavoured for centuries to establish a temporal dominion, by fire and sword, by political intrigue, by Inquisition methods, by perverse education of helpless children, and by all the abominable wiles of priestcraft: “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites,” said Jesus, “for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is become so, ye make him twofold more a son of hell than yourselves” (Matt. 23. 15).

We see then that Jesus condemned the “teachers of Israel” for claiming God’s authority while opposing divine truth and persecuting the truth-revealer, for professing attachment to his person while his “word had no place in them”, for their wholly false ideas of religion which had nothing in common with his own simple gospel of love, for their evil methods of propagating their false creed, for their hypocrisy in concealing their avarice and falsehood under the guise of religion, etc., and Roman Catholics “must admit, if they closely analyze their own position” that *every item in this indictment by Jesus applies with special force to the Church of Rome*; consequently once again it fully deserves the denunciation and sentence pronounced by Jesus against Jewish ecclesiasticism, ending “ye hear not the words of God because ye are not of God” (v. 47). This supplies the answer to the present question for, according to Jesus himself, this Church being “not of God” has no “Divine authority”, is in no way entitled to exercise “supreme power and right to teach” its false doctrines, and so cannot claim to be a “Catholic”, that is, “universal”, faith. Such ecclesiastical systems, which strongly oppose freedom of thought and independent scientific research, are in fact the greatest obstacles to True, Rational, *Universal*, Exalting religion.

EXALTING

(John 8. 43-47) .

The remaining verses of this gospel extract consist of the climax, with the judicial summing up and verdict of the supreme Christian arbitrator. He holds before him his indictment against ecclesiasticism, both Jewish and Roman Catholic, whose priests *alike* teach, (t) False beliefs in (1) a cruel sacrifice-exacting personal god, instead of the only true spiritual God "who desires mercy and not sacrifice": in (2) elaborate ceremonial worship with burdensome penances and offerings, instead of the "true worship in spirit and in truth" of the God who freely forgives all those who forgive; and in (3) an effete moral code, approving persecution of truth revealers, by stoning, crucifying, and Inquisition methods of priestly coercion, instead of the true law of divine love. (r) Irrational trust in spiritual "fathers", patriarchs, patron saints, "church fathers", or popes, instead of in the one "heavenly Father". (u) False confidence in exclusive divine favour involving claims to earthly sovereignty, either a Messianic kingdom or temporal power, whereas Jesus preached a spiritual universal kingdom that "is not of this world", and (e) False reliance on priestly writings, traditions, and precepts, resulting in the perpetuation of debasing pagan doctrines and superstitions, thus making void the true "word of God" spoken by Jesus. This list of fundamental errors common to these ecclesiastical organizations shows that the whole system of the Church of Rome is on a par with that of the Jews, which Jesus condemned; both alike are not TRUE, *every item in the list being shown as directly opposed to what Jesus certified to be divine truth*, while the terribly evil fruit produced by the Christian Church at the height of its power in the dark ages amply confirms this conclusion in its case.

As we see, Jesus vehemently censured the lust of wealth and pomp and power underlying the whole of these priest-taught errors, and now he deplores the abject credulity which first caused their irrational acceptance, and then rendered impossible any attempt to replace them by his words of truth: "Why do ye not understand my speech? Even because ye cannot hear my word" (v. 43). It should be noticed that all the above errors are matters of mere belief in what is supported only by the authority of self-interested "blind leaders of the blind" (Matt. 15. 14): such credence has nothing to do with reason, for the lack of which ~~Jesus~~ reproached the disciples when he referred misleadingly to their "little faith", intending thereby, as the context shows, "little reasoning power", "If God doth so clothe the grass of the field . . . shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" (Matt. 6. 30). This simple example of rational religious argument is directed towards the only proper objective of such, viz. God

—it is a quite reasonable deduction—from intelligent observation—of a simple natural fact; it is thus in all these respects contrary to the above fatuous credulity, for the Roman Catholic is taught to put faith in his Church as the voice of God, to accept its teaching, however irrational, to repress his own God-given powers of observation and deduction, and to believe implicitly an extraordinary medley (p. 166) of superstitious material, both biblical and ecclesiastical. The above-quoted apparently devout and learned champion of the Roman Catholic Church remarks in his same essay.¹ “we receive all the food for thought through our senses. When therefore we are no longer in a position to do this, when physical conditions have ceased, thinking ceases; and supposing a permanent cessation the soul is not”: this is the very condition which he admits this Church produces on its followers, and which he approves in his own case by saying: “I accept what the Church teaches, *and trust her more than I do the evidence of my senses.*” It was just this self-same sense-paralysing, soul-destroying credulity and ecclesiolatry of the apparently devout and learned champions of the Jewish faith, coupled with their biting reference regarding his birth (see p. 134) which roused Jesus to the highest pitch of fury, and caused him to pour out the vials of his wrath on all those who propagated this deadly spiritual malady, the course of which can be traced in the Catholic Church.

All Christ-worshippers are taught, usually in childhood, and are bound to accept as true, the fundamental apostolic doctrine (1 Cor. 15. 14) on which their entire faith depends, that the body of Jesus taken down dead from the cross was subsequently re-animated—although we have a scientific proof, narrated in the biblical account by a reliable eyewitness, that in reality his body was not dead at that time (p. 138)—and once this miracle is accepted it then becomes impossible for Christians to refuse credence to other gross superstitions, recorded in the Bible and approved by the Church, more particularly the sequels to the resurrection, the ascension, the second coming, and the final judgment as set forth in the official Church creed. Enlightened biblical scholars try to ignore this as much as possible and keep beliefs in the supernatural, in Satan, devils, spirits, sorcery, witchcraft, and biblical myths and miracles generally, well in the background; in this way they look down on their uneducated or more credulous fellow Christians who believe such things, while they regard spectralists, and faith healers as superstition-mongers on a level with African fetish worshippers and witch doctors. But the Church of Rome as usual is far more crafty: recognizing that superstitious ~~“sore~~ are the most potent factors in the propagation of its false faith, it encourages belief in demons, spirits, magic, etc., insisting of course on its own interpretation thereof, and on its own monopoly of exorcism and faith healing. As even highly intellectual Roman

¹ *Where are the Dead?* p. 52.

Catholics admit being spiritually blindfolded by this Church, and believing anything it teaches, however contrary to their senses, it is little wonder that the masses of the people, and especially the ignorant peasantry, in Roman Catholic countries, are reduced to a state of spiritual insensibility, of spiritual imbecility, such as caused Jesus to exclaim, in rage and despair, that the similarly priest-ridden Jews were so degraded they could not hear, could not understand, his words of truth that would "make them free". The only way to get rid of this thought-paralysing, soul-destroying credulity is to withdraw the poisonous superstition, on which it feeds, from the religious education of the young—to rule it out altogether in every shape and form, as science does, as TRUE religion does, as the pure teaching of Jesus does.

Take as the most important example of such superstition this Church-taught doctrine of the resurrection of Christ's dead body, which is the very foundation of Christianity: when we consider the countless thousands of millions of people since the world began, who have lived, and died, and, without a single exception, remain dead, we see how extraordinarily improbable would be such a resurrection, and the actual fact is (pp. 138-9) that the biblical narrative of this event, when intelligently read, shows it to have been in every respect a quite natural occurrence, such as might happen any day under similar circumstances. Notwithstanding this the whole of Christendom pronounces without any reliable evidence that this ordinary event was an amazing miracle, and bigoted Roman Catholics who "accept what the Church teaches and trust her more than the evidence of their senses" approve a "Holy Office" for the condemnation of incredulous heretics who reject this fundamental error. But just as there was a Nicodemus and a Joseph of Arimathæa amongst the Pharisees, so there may be some Christians, even some Roman Catholics, whose minds are still open to receive truth: if so let them repudiate this miracle, proved false, and then see what happens. At once the whole associated superstitions of the Apostles' creed collapse, fears of sin, of death, and of judgment to come all vanish, and the souls, thus freed from credulous belief in these ecclesiastical errors, are at liberty to enjoy the spiritual benefits, including life eternal, offered by Jesus to his true disciples (vs. 31, 32, 51) which are withheld from temple idolaters (vs. 21, 24).

But the Christian Church worshippers, like the Jehovah-worshipping Jews, hug their superstition, and, having been trained from infancy to allay the fears it engenders, by the ceremonial worship of a crucified saviour, they have become so attached to this idolatrous ritual that, in spite of its heavy burdens, they continue to make the most plausible excuses for persisting in their cherished ecclesiastical routine. They plead that they worship as did their ancestors before them: they plead that their faith suits them, comforts, and consoles them in trouble, makes them

more happy and contented during life, and diminishes or even dispels their fears of death and the hereafter, they plead that many noble, pious, and admirable characters conform to some ecclesiastical system, and they like to be associated with such; they plead that religious services and ceremonies exercise an elevating and æsthetic influence on human lives, and form an indispensable adjunct to the education of children, and to the civilization of savage races; they plead that the Church fills a want in the community, is a convenient organization for distributing charity, makes for law and order, and in short is an absolutely requisite "pillar of the state", and so on, and so on. Now all these excuses were, or might have been, urged by the condemned Jews, and would consequently be summarily dismissed by Jesus, who showed that the above benefits are mere shams if based on the worship of a false personal god, instead of on true religion, or whole-hearted devotion to God's will as he interpreted it. He was indeed most exacting in this matter, for he saw clearly (Matt. 15. 6-9) that ceremonial worship and true religion are so completely opposed to each other that any attempt to combine them would only result in formal ritualism banishing the doing of God's will, as it had done with the Jews, and as in fact it was fated to do subsequently in the Christian subversion of his own truth¹

This opposition between genuine religion which Jesus taught, and mere ritual which he abhorred, was of course the great bone of contention between him and the priestly leaders of the Jews, as it would still be between him and the Catholic Church if he could come to life again at the present day. Ceremonial worship in fact bears the same relation to true religion that paralysing drugs like opium, alcohol, etc., bear to human food materials: these narcotics are extremely injurious when taken constantly in large quantities, and even in moderation are only beneficial under very abnormal circumstances, for the healthy system, which receives regular supplies of food, has no need of such drugs; they have no place amongst natural food-stuffs; there are no organs or digestive secretions to change them into assimilable nourishment, and they are not stored up in the body for use when required, but on the contrary are eliminated unchanged as fast as the excretory organs can manage to get rid of them. The Church of Rome, like "the shepherds of Israel" (Ezek. 34.), does not feed its followers freely with true religion, but drugs them at a heavy price with narcotic ceremonial, until, as Jesus complained of the treasury Jews, they can neither hear nor understand spiritual truth: other Christian sects take this noxious substitute for true religion in smaller and varying quantities, renewable weekly, as

¹ Much the same thing happened with Buddhism which could make no permanent headway against the rigid caste system of Brahminism in India, although it flourished exceedingly in other Eastern countries where not so opposed.

it has no permanent place in their lives. But the true disciples of Jesus abstain altogether from these heathenish rites, since they must comply with his decisive words, "true worshippers worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for such doth the Father seek to be his worshippers" (John 4. 23): this is no intermittent soul-drugging, sense-paralysing idolatry, but genuine constant assimilation of spiritual nourishment, producing healthy vigorous religious vitality, reflected in every thought, word, and action of daily life.

A cynic might perhaps be inclined to conclude from all this that since religion seems to be almost exclusively a matter of credulity, allied with the chances of birth, education, and environment, and since men seem to get along somehow with all kinds of creeds or with none at all—while science has done more towards the enlightenment and progress of the world in one century of comparative freedom from ecclesiastical persecution, than all the creeds have achieved in thousands of years—surely then it would be better to abolish these faiths altogether, reject religion universally and trust solely to reason, science and philosophy for guidance in the future. Jesus answers this proposition very conclusively. He did indeed vigorously condemn the whole Jewish system of priest-taught errors and, by inference, all other systems of sacrificial atonement, ecclesiastical ritual, and debasing faith in superstition: notwithstanding that these systems are linked in man's mind with the tenderest memories of childhood, represent his most cherished beliefs, enable him to buy his much treasured "consolations of religion", and even pretend to guarantee him a rather equivocal "sure and certain hope of resurrection to eternal life", yet Jesus ruthlessly declared to these Jews of old, and to their even more idolatrous Christ-worshipping successors to-day, that these religious ideas are totally false, that they are contrary to his words of truth, and so they "are not of God". But he was no fanatical iconoclast, for what he destroyed he was willing to restore a thousand-fold: he was prepared to lay apparently sacrilegious hands on their venerated temple, rend asunder its veil, and violate its "holy of holies", but only on condition of replacing all this by his really precious spiritual truth, enshrined in the temple of the human mind. He did not recommend these Jews, and would never have recommended this present generation, to do without religion, for his whole life was devoted to preaching the exalting power of the world-old gospel, that God requires us to love him, and love each other, and that by doing this—not merely believing it, or believing anything else—by *doing* God's will in conforming to his law of love we "*therefore* shall be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect", and become fit to "enter the kingdom of heaven", or, as Buddha expressed it five centuries previously, we attain Arahatsip, "the state of him who is worthy". If this gospel be true—and Jesus testified that he "heard it from

God"—then *all schemes and efforts towards reformation, social, religious, or political, must be wholly imbued with the spirit of this golden rule.* What a splendid opportunity for the revolutionary movements and despotic governments of the day to set each its own house in order by adopting this TRUE religion, and thus prove to the world that *herein lies the real solution of all national and international questions!* If this gospel be true—and it is proved so by the lives and actions of good and noble men of all creeds and of no official creed, while we can all prove it true by trying it in our own lives—then neither individuals, nor any society or state, can really flourish without actively and unceasingly co-operating in this divine truth. If this gospel be TRUE—and we have tried to keep it so by application of the fourfold test (Chap. 4., Section "True"; see also p. 165)—then reason, science, and philosophy, being entirely concerned with establishing truth, can only confirm it, as in reality they do (Part III); they cannot deny this gospel of God, nor can they guide men to any higher truth than God-like perfection attained through "love divine all love excelling".

And just because, as Jesus himself said, this exalting "truth that he heard from God had no place in" sacerdotal systems of the Jewish type, he therefore condemned these as false. In his eyes they are simply priestly organizations hypocritically exploiting superstition in the name of religion, they impose heavy burdens of tithes and ritual observances for their own purpose of gaining wealth and temporal power; they are the greatest foes of freedom and of whatever would make men free; they are bitterly opposed to truth that tends to enlightenment and progress, and carry their hostility to the extent of persecuting and murdering truth-revealers. It seemed to Jesus that such inveterate antagonism to the true religion he had "heard from God" could only originate from some diabolical source, so he pronounced his verdict accordingly. And the Church of Rome is a tree grown from this same sacerdotal seed, showing exactly the same pharisaic characters, and producing precisely the same evil fruit, by which, according to Jesus, it may be known. Common humanity revolts at the extortions, cruel tortures, wars, massacres, and other barbarities perpetrated in the name of Christ by this Church in past times, and common sense, even without the admission of its advocate, is quite sufficient to convince us that *this impenitent Church is bound by its preposterous claim of infallible divine authority to approve these abominable atrocities, and to repeat them in the future, if it is ever again allowed to usurp the supreme power to enforce its pernicious superstitions.* Observation of countries where Roman Catholicism has the upper hand shows that this Church is just as intolerant, just as greedy of wealth and power, and just as unscrupulous in its method of repressing truth, and propagating its enslaving creed, as it has ever been. Reasoning then from such observations, compared with the accepted biblical record,

confirms the previous conclusion that *this faith stands condemned, by Jesus himself, on all matters for which he censured the treasury Jews* in the following terrible denunciation: "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father it is your will to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and stood not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father thereof" (John 8. 44).

SUMMARY AND VERDICT

Jesus then sums up the whole TRUE case in four crisp consecutive sentences (vs. 45-47), all as applicable to the Church of Rome as to the temple Jews: (t) "because I say the truth ye believe me not"—his word was True, but they preferred Church-taught tradition, ritual, and superstition. (r) "Which of you convicteth me of sin?"—it is Rational to test teaching by results; in his case he claimed his word was faultless, while they stood convicted of avarice, hypocrisy, and murderous hatred of truth and truth-revealers. (u) "If I say truth why do ye not believe me"?—his word being true and rational deserved Universal acceptance, but it could have "no place in" the offspring of the father of lies. (e) "He that is of God heareth the words of God", and he that heareth and doeth God's words is Exalted unto the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 7. 21), but they "hear them not because they are not of God". That is the final crushing judgment of Jesus on all such false and cruel superstition-mongers, "Ye are not of God": outcast from his presence, excluded from the source of all life and light, rejected from the kingdom of heaven, because they "are not of God". They may cry "Lord, Lord", claiming they taught in the name of him who preached divine love and truth, but he "will profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matt. 7. 23) "YE ARE NOT OF GOD".

All Roman Catholics who recognize the justice of this excommunication of the Jews uttered by Jesus, should refer their own case to this only supreme Christian authority, should read his simple "word of God", contained especially in his sermon on the mount (Matt. 5. 6, 7), and see for themselves that this likewise "has no place in", does not in any way "fit in with", all the complicated superstitions and ritual of their mammon-worshipping Church, and so they must choose which they will serve—they cannot serve both (Matt. 6. 24). It is a plain, undeniable, easily observed fact that the whole of their system derives no support from the discourse in which Jesus "taught with authority" (Matt. 7. 29) all that is "necessary to salvation". The most essential elements of the Catholic faith (see pp. 130, 166), the virgin birth, the atonement on the cross, the resurrection, the ascension,

and the second coming—all proved false—are not even mentioned; faith in these, or in anything supernatural, is neither invoked nor commended, lengthy prayers and ritual are strongly condemned, the sacraments are totally ignored, the immoral code, which could sanction the pillage, torture, and persecution even unto a cruel death, of supposed heretics, is completely repudiated by the law of love and by the abundant, thrice repeated, blessings bestowed on the victims of such persecution—and yet, notwithstanding that it omits or condemns all that the Church of Rome regards as most sacred and absolutely indispensable, Jesus closes this true “gospel of God” with the assurance, “every one therefore which heareth *these words* of mine, and *doeth them*, shall be likened unto a wise man, which built his house upon the rock”, etc. (Matt. 7. 24). Surely, surely, Roman Catholics who read this wonderful freely-given truth that Jesus claimed to have “heard from God” must see that it is totally at variance with all the sham religion, false sacraments, and theatrical mummery sold to them by the avaricious Church which holds them in its toils.

SUPPLEMENTARY CONCLUSION

Thanks to the Church-persecuted Galileo and many like him, scientific truth has escaped suppression, and its innumerable benefits are revolutionizing the world, enlightening the nations, and even to some extent freeing reluctant Churches from their cherished errors and superstitions: science can indeed do nothing but good to TRUE religion, and vice versa. In a recent journal¹ the above mouthpiece of the Catholic faith has written a bellicose article stating that “those who, from a weakness of soul, like to believe that there can be a reconciliation between such opposites (science and religion) have not considered the nature of the case. . . . In this country, with much the greater part of men who think clearly and closely upon these affairs, the battle does seem at least three-quarters won by the scientific spirit, and the remainder of the action will be no more than the ‘cleaning up’ which follows successful assault. I make no doubt that the future, when we consider European civilization as a whole, will gravely disappoint this view. The religious spirit has begun its counter-offensive. . . . That such a reaction is now in progress—and increasingly formidable—should be apparent to anyone who can look beyond the boundaries of his own nation.” But this writer’s only idea of religion is sacerdotalism, the repression of all freedom of thought and action, and the spread of the grossest superstition by unbridled priestly coercion; the fruits of this in the past have been ‘holy wars’, massacres, persecution, and the horrors of the thumb-screw, rack, and stake of the Inquisition, and with some of these

¹ *Discovery*, January, 1934.

evils—judging by this writer's veiled threat of "formidable counter-offensive", by the papal resumption of temporal power, and the building of the Vatican city—Christendom, seems once more menaced. On the other hand this writer appears quite unaware that TRUE religion as preached by Jesus and those who follow him means literally "a bond" of union, and is the spiritual union of God and mankind in one common bond of divine love and truth—the fruits of which spiritual influence are invariably, "love, joy, peace", and perfect freedom. The relationship of science to religion, then, depends entirely on which of these two ideals we mean by religion: if we mean the grinding slavery of mind and body under priestly tyranny as in the Dark Ages, and in Roman Catholic countries at the present day, then science, and philosophy, and everything, and everyone that stands for truth, freedom, love, peace, honour, and all the highest human, nay, divine, ideals, must oppose strongly, as Jesus did, what is obviously "not of God". But if we mean by religion the "worship of God the spirit in spirit and in truth", then science and religion are indissolubly linked together by this bond; science supplies religion with fundamental truth (p. 234) in place of superstition, e.g. it replaces resurrection myths by such knowledge as for example, how the universal Spirit guides the evolution of the most distant nebulae into habitable worlds teeming with varied life, and religion in return supplies science with the spirit of divine love in the application of all its discoveries to beneficent purposes. How correctly does Jesus state this combination of spirit of love (religion) and truth (science) to be the true worship by which alone the eternal spirit of love-inspired reason can be approached (John 4. 23, 24), and how rightly he condemned sacerdotalism for being devoid of both these divine characters and therefore "not of God"!

Thanks to the Church-martyred Tyndale, and many like him, a certain measure of religious freedom has been preserved outside Roman Catholic communities, though still there can be no real liberty, in this respect, until Churches and parents, throughout the whole world, cease poisoning the minds of children with controversial religious ideas, thus making them lifelong partisans of some particular creed or sect. Tyndale gave his life in order to enable all Englishmen "to read or hear the word" of Jesus in their mother tongue, and when the apostate Christian Church silenced him for ever by twisting the cord round his neck, he prayed with his last breath, "Lord, open the King of England's eyes"—within three years King Henry had openly broken with the pope, and a Bible, that was virtually Tyndale's translation, stood in every parish church throughout the land. It seems fitting then to terminate here by repeating the fervent hope that many earnest, educated and intelligent members of the Church of Rome may open first their own eyes, and then those of their co-religionists to the following facts—(t) that their endless Church-taught superstitions

"have no place in" the true gospel of God preached by Jesus, especially in the sermon on the mount and are therefore *pronounced by him* to be utterly false. (r) *That Jesus himself reasoned* that such false ecclesiastical systems are satanic in origin, so most certainly "are not of God," and cannot therefore have any divine authority. (u) *That Jesus convicts* the Church of Rome of being evil because of its terribly evil fruits, consequently its faith is quite unfit for universal acceptance, and so has no claim to the title of "Catholic". (e) *That Jesus denies it* "the supreme power and right to teach", and particularly to traffic in, its idolatrous ritual, false sacraments, priestly confession and absolution, etc., which are all fundamentally contrary to "God's word" and promise of free forgiveness, and are destructive of all genuine spiritual freedom and life—that, in short, the whole sacerdotal tradition of *the Church of Rome stands condemned by Jesus* as in no respect TRUE, but on the contrary entirely opposed to his own simple, true, rational, universal and exalting teaching.

The following quotation refers to the temptation of Buddha, but as it evidently describes accurately the attitude of Jesus, and all other truth-upholders, towards orthodox superstition and priestly error, it forms an appropriate conclusion to this chapter.

"And third came she who gives dark creeds their power,
 Silabbat—paramâsa, sorceress,
 Draped fair in many lands as lowly Faith,
 But ever juggling souls with rites and prayers,
 The keeper of those keys which lock up Hells
 And open Heavens 'Wilt thou dare', she said,
 'Put by our sacred books, dethrone our gods,
 Unpeople all the temples, shaking down
 That law which feeds the priests and props the realms'
 But Buddha answered, 'What thou bidd'st me keep
 Is form which passes, but the free Truth stands;
 Get thee unto thy darkness'."

—SIR EDWIN ARNOLD'S *Light of Asia*, Book VI.

CHAPTER VI

EXALTING

The falsehood of regarding Pauline Christianity as an exalting faith

PAUL, in his widely adopted religious system, which passes under the name of Christianity (Acts 11. 26), perpetuated the error of worshipping Christ as God, with the result that this system shows exactly those degrading characters recognized previously (p. 66) as signs of falsehood in all the old pagan religious creeds.

TRUE

Like those heathen religious cults, Pauline Christianity was based on a personal god, and on miracles and supernatural incidents with which Christ, in common with all prominent religious teachers of olden times, was credited as a matter of course. Paul's own conversion was the effect of what he considered a miraculous vision, sufficient by itself to convince him that Christ had proved his godhood by rising from the dead, and this belief, thus established in his mind, he made the foundation stone of the Christian faith, as most succinctly stated in 1 Corinthians 15. 14: "If Christ be not risen then is our preaching vain, your faith also is vain." Yet the various accounts (Acts, chapters 9, 22, and 26) of Paul's conversion suggest a quite natural explanation of the occurrence as chiefly a sunstroke: his inordinately excited mental condition (Chap. 9. 1 and 26. 11), perhaps artificially stimulated by following his own advice to Timothy (1 Tim. 5. 23), and his exhausting forced march on Damascus through the noon-day heat (Chap. 22. 6), would predispose him thereto: the flash of light, sudden giddiness and fall to the earth, followed by temporary blindness or photophobia, and disinclination for food, with subsidence of these symptoms after three days' rest—all these indicate that his hallucination and subsequent nervous reaction to the opposite extreme in his attitude towards the Christians, were simply the natural outcome of "kicking against the goad", worry, excitement, and fatigue, plus "a touch of the sun"; it may be added that Paul's "thorn in the flesh" (2 Cor. 12. 7) would then very probably have been either weak inflamed eyes intolerant of light, or severe headaches which are common consequences of sunstroke.

If this incident occurred nowadays such an interpretation would certainly be generally accepted except by 'spectralists',

but if a supernatural explanation be insisted upon, then one might apply the Roman Catholic doctrine, which states that, "such phenomena must be taken to be the work of fallen spirits permitted by Providence to tempt men away from God. *In no case* are they the work of disembodied spirits who have 'passed over' from their earth life. But the evil spirits have extraordinary powers, and among them that of masquerading as the departed relatives or friends of those who consult mediums, or as historical characters."¹ This very positive statement, representing apparently the view of a Church which specially claims (p. 176) intimate knowledge of evil spirits, seems to commit at least Roman Catholics, if not other Christians, to the strange belief that God permitted a masquerading evil spirit to deceive Paul. In 1 Corinthians 15 Paul cites this purely imaginary manifestation as a proof of what he regarded as the all-important fundamental doctrine of the resurrection, and the only additional evidence he adduces in support consists in appearances of Jesus shortly after his crucifixion, which have been accounted for in a quite natural way previously (p. 140 *et seq.*). Paul's preaching of the Christian faith was thus founded on a "heavenly vision" of very doubtful character; in order to establish the cherished pagan error of a flesh and blood god, it demands implicit belief in the revival of Christ's dead body—a wholly unprecedented violation of the uniform course of nature, in respect to death, throughout all ages—and this in turn involves acceptance of innumerable associated miracles and myths, such as are found in all the old pagan cults of personal gods, forming one of the signs that proved them false, and having the same significance in the case of Paul's system.

RATIONAL

Nor was this system rational, indeed it is confessedly based on faith not reason; but unless faith is in some degree reasonably justified, it degenerates, as the Pauline faith degenerated, into mere credulity and infatuation. Reason, which is "the likeliest God" within us, can only function when provided with a basis of actual facts: correct knowledge and sound reasoning thereon, are the two essentials to a right judgment in all things, but in the absence of one, or other, or both of these, the human mind is able, as children say, "to make believe" the most impossible and incredible absurdities, *especially if any earnestly desired object can be gained thereby* (pp. 136, 137). Herein lie the roots of all the superstition-mongering of ignorant bygone ages, and amongst present-day spectralists, fundamentalists, and superstitious fanatics of all kinds, who deliberately trust to blind faith rather than to

¹ Extract from critique on "Spiritism" by S. A. Blackmore, S.J., in *Times Literary Supplement*, June 18th, 1925, p. 419.

knowledge and reason—and herein, too, Pauline Christianity errs in common with all its pagan forerunners.

The disciples who started the resurrection legend did not act reasonably when they accounted for the empty tomb by this preposterous assumption, without even thinking that Jesus might have recovered naturally. As we have seen, reason played no part in Paul's sudden acceptance of belief in Christ's resurrection, for whether we attribute his change of mind to some ordinary cause like sunstroke, malaria, nerve-strain, superstitious fear, etc., or to possession by an evil spirit from God, it is evident that reason did not enter into the matter at all. Indeed if Paul had reasoned from the facts that his travelling companions "beheld no man" (Acts 9. 7), that his own eyes were closed, and even when opened were temporarily blinded, he must have concluded that, since there was no visible bodily presence, Christ's body had not been reanimated, and that the appearance was simply a mental vision, the vivid representation of thoughts agitating his own over-excited brain. Nor did Paul act at all rationally when he accepted unreservedly the resurrection statements of the superstitious disciples, who were naturally inclined to believe anything, however unreasonable, provided it restored their hopes of taking a prominent part in Christ's kingdom, which they "supposed was immediately to appear" (Luke 19. 11). And neither Paul nor his countless Christian followers can be said to be influenced by reason in attributing the actual recorded bodily reappearances of Jesus to miracle, instead of to natural recovery, and then to assume that their credulity entitles them to similar bodily resurrection.

But having "persuaded himself" concerning this myth, Paul most confidently preached, and inspired numerous converts to preach, that this risen Christ would fulfil his definite promise to reappear in power and great glory during the lifetime of that generation (Matt. 16. 28; 24. 34, etc.) "For this we say unto *you by the word of the Lord*, that *we that are alive*, that are left unto the coming of the Lord, shall in no wise precede them that are fallen asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then *we that are alive, that are left*, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4. 15-17). Instead however of taking part in this majestic pageant, Paul and all his converts, and the whole of that generation, shared the common lot of all men, thus proving this preaching and faith to have been deceptive. Why was this? Surely because in Paul's own words, "If Christ hath not been raised then is our preaching vain, your faith also is vain" (1 Cor. 15. 14). It is strange that in his farewell message to Timothy, when "the time of his departure was come" (2 Tim. 4. 6), Paul gave no explanation concerning the failure of his delusive prophecy to the Thessalonians, and one

wonders what the early Church thought if they read the above quoted passage at Paul's own funeral and memorial services. However comforting and inspiring Paul's detailed programme of Christ's reappearance may have been to "the elect", who fully expected to take part therein, it certainly offered no rational solution of the divine purpose regarding the generality of mankind : if Paul had applied his keen theological reasoning power to the question, he would have seen that this very restricted scheme of salvation, with its meagre doubtful harvest of highly credulous souls belonging to that single generation, showed no improvement on pagan notions concerning divine indifference to human woes, to human hopes, to human ideals, and most assuredly it was entirely inconsistent with the conception of a loving heavenly Father's care embracing all his creatures at all times, and in all places, as preached in the true gospel of Jesus.

In ancient times people could not believe the simple fact that the earth moved freely, controlled only by well balanced natural forces, so they invented the explanation that it was fixed on the back of a gigantic elephant, presumably white-coloured, whose feet were planted firmly on the solid impenetrable back of an equally gigantic tortoise. Naturally the ignorant people were quite willing to contribute towards the maintenance of such indispensable animals, while those who professed to understand their habits appointed themselves keepers, and acquired great wealth and power through their assumed influence with these supernatural agents. But after a time some thoughtful persons perceived that there was nothing underneath to support the tortoise, and they impiously concluded that the earth would remain quite unaffected if its baseless support were removed. With great difficulty they convinced the credulous people that their superstition was contrary to reason, and it was decided to try the effect of starving the animals, though the keepers vehemently protested, threatening that the earth would certainly fall into the bottomless pit. The result proved eminently satisfactory : the earth released, from its imaginary restraint, continued exactly as before, the white elephant and tortoise vanished, as all their kind must in a world where reason prevails, the people were freed from their grievous burden of taxation, and the keepers were relieved of their office and ill-gotten gains. Christendom is in like case but shows no signs as yet of repudiating its burdensome myths and superstition-mongers. Unable to appreciate the simple idea that Jesus said he came into the world to "preach the gospel of God" (Mark 1. 14, 38), which was inherently true and rational, so needed no other support, Paul, "not meet to be called an apostle", preached an entirely different "gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God" (Mark 1. 1, and Acts 8. 20), which was clearly stated by him to be wholly dependent on a miraculous resurrection from the dead (1 Cor. 15. 14) : on this in turn were founded extravagant ideas of an impending millennium, the whole

resting on nothing more substantial than conflicting rumours associated with Christ's natural recovery and empty tomb, on a fantasy of Paul's temporarily disordered brain, and on the "earnest expectation" concerning the fulfilment of a delusive promise that presently proved fallacious.

Paul's whole elaborate doctrine of salvation by faith in a risen Christ, with all the supernatural incidents and ecclesiastical errors connected therewith, could not possibly have been preached by Jesus during his lifetime, long before his resurrection and ascension were supposed to have happened. What Jesus did preach was "the gospel of the kingdom" (Matt. 4. 23): his first recorded public utterance was an echo of the Baptist's teaching "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 4. 17); the first verse in the sermon on the mount describes to whom the kingdom of heaven belongs (Matt. 5. 3); the expression "thy kingdom come" occupies a most prominent place in his short, simple, and only prayer for use by his followers; over and over again he repeats this phrase, and when later on he sent forth his apostles, he charges them also to "preach saying the kingdom of heaven is at hand", but neither they nor any of his hearers understood what he meant, though he continued to expound it even in his final defence before Pilate (John 18. 33-37)—evidently then *this gospel was in the eyes of Jesus the all-essential truth containing everything necessary for man's salvation.* Yet as fully defined in the fifth, sixth, and seventh chapters of Matthew, this "gospel of the kingdom" contains nothing miraculous or unreasonable, nothing of the "Apostles' creed" except its opening clause, nothing of Christ's life, nothing of the fundamental factor on which Paul based what he rightly calls "my gospel" (Rom. 2. 16; 16. 25, and 2 Tim. 2. 8), as stated in 1 Corinthians 15. 1, etc., "Now I make known unto you, brethren, the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye received, wherein also ye stand, *by which also ye are saved . . .* how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he hath been raised on the third day according to the scriptures. . . . And (v. 14) if Christ hath not been raised then is our preaching vain, your faith also is vain." Which of these two conflicting gospels is true? Is the servant greater than the master (Matt. 10. 24)? For exactly 1,900 years the Christ-worshipping Churches have persistently taught endless variations of the Pauline gospel with most deplorable results, it is high time therefore for the divided Christian world to reject this completely discredited faith with all its useless rites, prayers, and sacraments, and to unite together in an earnest whole-hearted effort to *carry out in practical everyday life* the true "gospel of the kingdom of heaven" which, according to Jesus, consists in "doing God's will".

If Paul had reasoned out this matter instead of being misled by myths, legends and visions, if he had "determined to know" only the teaching of Jesus instead of deifying and worshipping

the crucified Christ (1 Cor. 2. 2), he would not have deluded himself and his immediate converts with vain ascension hopes, he would not have kept Christian countries for centuries in a state of ignorance and superstition, nor would they have been rent asunder with ecclesiastical discord, persecution and strife culminating in the ghastly war of Christendom, for the true gospel of the kingdom of heaven "could never have permitted or produced such terribly evil fruit. We may conclude then that Pauline Christianity—which is the ecclesiastical Christolatry dominating Christendom all through the Christian era—makes no appeal to reason, and has nothing to do with the reasonable teaching of Jesus, but is simply the acme of superstitious credulity, and the fruitful parent of endless false doctrines, and schisms, becoming thus a constant menace to the peace, unity and prosperity of the world.

UNIVERSAL

It seems superfluous to prove that a creed composed principally of superstition—admittedly based on the miraculous character attributed to quite natural events—can never be voluntarily accepted by intelligent unprejudiced minds, and consequently can never be universally adopted by an enlightened world, but if such proof be required it is amply supplied by the figures of the previously mentioned questionnaire (p. 65). Out of over 14,000 persons—who were probably all assiduously taught throughout childhood to repeat the Apostles' creed, and were required to assert their acceptance of it both at their baptism and confirmation—only 7,484, or little more than half, admitted that they still adhered to this belief in their adult life: surely this proves conclusively that the fundamental doctrines of Pauline Christianity, regarded as essential articles of belief by the modern Churches, can never be generally approved even by unfairly biased minds, and so cannot be included in the tenets of TRUE religion, which must be universally acceptable. It may however be desirable to show that the methods adopted by the Church for foisting these false doctrines on the world are not only grossly unfair to the children whose birthright freedom of religious thought is impaired for life thereby, but are also directly contrary to the teaching of Jesus, and utterly subversive of his beautiful conception of a loving heavenly Father.

According to the Church service, orthodox Christians, when admitted to the "estate of holy matrimony", are instructed that it provides "a remedy against sin whereby they may keep themselves undefiled members of Christ's body", while "procreating children to be brought up in the fear of the Lord", yet subsequently the Church completely stultifies this assurance by informing those who become parents that the fruit of their God-joined and Church-blessed union is "born in original sin, and in the wrath of God",

which can only be removed by the "laver of regeneration in baptism", the efficacy of which is solemnly certified at the end of the baptismal service. When Jesus wished to place before his disciples a perfect example he called a little child and set him in the midst of them (Matt. 18. 2), and on this text preached a sermon full of tender sympathy for these helpless innocents, mixed with stern denunciation of all those who should molest or despise any of these little ones: he did not ask if the little toddler were duly baptized, which it certainly was not, nor did he make the slightest reference to any "sacrament generally necessary to salvation", and so far from considering children as being tainted with "original sin", and "deserving of God's wrath and damnation" (Article IX, C.E. Prayer Book) he expressly stated that "it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish" (v. 14): further remembering his own words that "the pure in heart shall see God" (Matt. 5. 8), he, as it were, stamped all children for ever with the hall-mark of perfect purity by certifying that they "do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 18. 10).

But what Jesus regarded as holiness personified, the Church most presumptuously pronounces to be "common and unclean" and urgently in need of baptismal purification, so urgently indeed that if the child dies before this rite is performed it is refused "Christian burial", and must be deposited unceremoniously in "that shabby corner of God's allotment where he lets the nettles grow and where unbaptized infants, notorious drunkards, suicides, and others of the conjecturally damned, are laid".¹ It matters not one iota whether these babes are baptized or not, whether they are legitimate or born out of wedlock as he was, in all cases the anguished mothers of stricken children can solace themselves with the unconditional assurance which came from the lips of Jesus himself, "I say unto you that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven." If Christians must needs make distinctions even in regard to the tenants of God's acre, let them reserve a "holy of holies" in which all children alike may be reverently, even silently, laid to rest: burial service utterances are obviously superfluous in the case of those whom Jesus certified to be always in God's presence; let not *their* graves at least be desecrated with a cross, for he who hung thereon proclaimed that these sinless ones require no atonement; nor have they need of any epitaph other than the words of Jesus, which might fitly be inscribed over the entrance gate to this sacred dormitory: "Their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven."

In spite of these authoritative words and in defiance of common-sense the Churches persist in clinging to their abominable false doctrine

¹ Taken from the pathetic account of a mother's mental agony over her dying baby, its amateur baptism, and the Church's attitude towards the same in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*.

of "original or birth-sin", solely because it enables them to obtain complete control over the religious training of children during their most susceptible years: this is clearly announced in the baptismal service, for, having bound this angel in the flesh to "renounce the devil and all his works", and to "believe steadfastly all the items of the Apostles' creed", the sponsors are there and then cautioned to see that the child is brought up on these lines. Thereafter parents, sponsors, the clergy, Sunday school teachers, and, if the Church can manage it, day school teachers also, continue to drill into the child's mind fallacious Pauline doctrines—which are a stumbling block even to adults, and wholly unintelligible to young children—with the object of complying with the baptismal exhortation, "Ye are to take care that this child be brought to the bishop to be confirmed by him as soon as he can say the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments in the vulgar tongue." At this confirmation service, which is thus purposely performed long before the child can form any mature judgment on such matters, he is required to ratify "the solemn vow, promise, and profession" made without his knowledge or consent at his infant baptism, being induced to do so, not from any spontaneous religious desire or sincere conviction, but from outside pressure and compliance with custom, from a child's natural satisfaction at taking a prominent part in a public ceremony which implies recognition of his being partly "grown up", and from curiosity concerning the mysterious sacrament hitherto debarred to him.

By means of this intense, persistent, and insidious pressure exercised on susceptible minds throughout the whole period of defenceless childhood the Churches naturally do succeed in making perhaps half their victims permanent bond slaves of some form of Pauline Christolatry, which has scarcely anything in common with the true "gospel of God" taught by Jesus. Even Paul himself lamented that "Christ was divided" in those early days, "some being of Paul, some of Apollo, some of Cephas, and some of Christ", which would never have been the case if they had been content simply to "do God's will", as Jesus preached, instead of trying to save their souls by cultivating faith in fantastic visions and miracles, and instituting idolatrous sacraments and ceremonies. Surely the religious experience of all the intervening centuries, and the existence of the innumerable warring sects of Christianity at all times, prove clearly that Christ must always be divided, and neither Paul's unsurpassed eloquence, nor hopes of a glorious resurrection and ascension, nor fears of eternal damnation in hell, nor ghastly Inquisition tortures and cruel martyrdom, nor the bribing methods of civilizing missionaries, nor the above shameful perversion of the helpless child-mind, nor all the manifold wiles of priestcraft can ever succeed in making mankind accept any form of ecclesiastical Christolatry as the universal religion of an enlightened world. *The most urgent need of the world to-day is to protect the minds of*

children everywhere from the stranglehold of ecclesiastical superstitions, creeds, dogmas, sacraments, ritual, in short, strife provoking mummery of all kinds, and to substitute for these the easy yoke and light burden offered by Jesus in the true all-uniting religion of divine universal love, so easily understood and eagerly accepted by children, while at the same time so commendable in every respect to mature and most exacting minds as the only efficient method of "salvation" for mankind, even in this world.

"So many gods, so many creeds,
So many paths that wind and wind,
While just the art of being kind,
Is all this ~~old~~ world needs"

—THOS. BRACKEN.

EXALTING

The simple teaching of Jesus is particularly exalting in its complete freedom from any taint of the sacrificial bribery found in all pagan creeds (p. 66). This debasing notion of appeasing angry gods by sacrifice, and obtaining their favour by offerings of worldly goods, has always been fostered by priestcraft, which prospers amazingly thereby, and the Hebrew scriptures afford abundant evidence of the oppressive burdens imposed on the priest-ridden Jewish race by this means; but when events proved that this system was of no avail in preventing or remedying national disasters, thinkers, seers, true "men of God" arose, who showed that such degrading conceptions were utterly false, and quite unworthy of the deity, whom they began to represent as loving and righteous in all his dealings at least with his "chosen people". The discriminating mind of Jesus seems to have been profoundly impressed with this idea, as shown by his frequent references to passages in the Old Testament expressing disapproval of sacrifices: thus on two separate occasions (Matt. 9. 13; 12. 7) he quotes the words of Hosea (Chap. 6. 6): "I desire mercy and not sacrifice," and when he censured the Pharisees most severely for paying attention to tithes instead of to justice, mercy and faith (Matt. 23. 23) he was evidently referring to the passage in Micah (Chap. 6. 6-8), "Shall I come before the high God with burnt offerings? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams? . . . He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" Moreover Jesus highly commended the scribe (Mark 12. 32-34) who cited a similar extract from the Psalms (40. 6-8) by saying to him: "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God," and it may well be that he had this reference in his mind when he stated that they who enter into this kingdom are those who "do the will of God", since these are the very words used by the psalmist, "Burnt offerings and sin offerings hast thou not required . . . I

delight to do thy will, O my God." Finally his utter detestation of sacrificial worship is evident not only by its condemnation in the teaching of Jesus, but also by the vigorous measures he took to purge the temple courts of all that appertained to these practices; the priests took care that this attack on what was the main source of their revenue and power should not be forgotten, it formed the chief factor in his accusation and condemnation (Matt. 26. 61), and was cast in his teeth while he hung on the cross (Matt. 27. 40), *so in reality his own death was due to the unrelenting hatred of the priests caused by his determined opposition to the doctrine that the favour of God and atonement for sin could be obtained through sacrificial offerings and temple worship. Surely this proves conclusively to any unbiassed mind that Jesus could not possibly have believed and taught that he himself in his own person was such a sacrificial victim, and this is abundantly confirmed by the biblical narrative describing the events of Christ's last days.* If he really went up to Jerusalem to offer himself as a voluntary propitiatory sacrifice that would redeem the world from sin, according to a plan pre-arranged by God (Acts 2. 23), foretold by the prophets generations previously (e.g. Isaiah 53, etc.), for which he had been miraculously strengthened apparently by communion with Moses and Elias on the mountain of transfiguration, as well as by an angel in the garden of Gethsemane, for which too, in every detail, he had prepared his disciples (Matt. 16. 21; 20. 18, etc.), and if he knew for certain that his dead body would arise from the tomb in a few hours (Mark 9. 31), and would ascend into heaven, and be seated at the right hand of God—then most assuredly he could not have failed to consummate this glorious sacrifice with a joy unspeakable, with a martyr's ecstatic indifference to suffering, and with a hero's sublime contempt of death. As "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" he had no reason to hold life dear; he who had told his disciples to "rejoice and be exceeding glad" at persecution (Matt. 5. 12), and to "be not afraid of them which kill the body but are not able to kill the soul" (Matt. 10. 2)—*he was not likely to fear any ordeal, for he of all men should have known that his "light affliction, which is for the moment, worketh more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor. 4. 17).* There is no need to insist that his recorded dejection and agony, if true (see pp. 125-6), his prayer, "let this cup pass away from me", his sullen resentful attitude during his trial, his protests and explanations, the dismay of his disciples at the totally unexpected turn of events, and above all his final definite admission that God had forsaken him, alike prove incontestably that there was ~~here~~ no question of accomplishing a voluntary divinely appointed sacrifice, but that his tragic fate was accepted both by Christ and his disciples as the end of their Messianic dreams. The whole story of Christ's persistent provocation of the ecclesiastical authorities—culminating in the scene of violence in their sacred temple—is so straightforward, and his betrayal, arrest, trial, self-defence, and condemnation

such a natural sequence in those times of perfervid superstitious zeal, that the only rational conclusion possible is to regard his death, like many, many others, as the barbarous treatment meted out to an imprudent revealer of truth by an intolerant and inhuman priesthood; there is nothing whatever in the narrative to suggest that the victim was offering himself as a willing atonement for sin.

Since this idea of a voluntary sacrifice for sin forms the very essence of the generally accepted Pauline Christianity it deserves to be submitted most carefully to the usual TRUE test. (t) In the face of all the above it seems incredible that Paul should have represented Christ as "an offering and a sacrifice to God for an odour of a sweet smell" (Ephes. 5. 2), and by his innumerable repetitions of this odious idea in his writings (Rom. 3. 24, 25; 4. 25; 5. 8, 9, etc.) have made it the cardinal doctrine in the Christolatrous cult which he fastened upon the Christian world to this day. Still more astonishing is it that in his epistle to the Hebrews he actually reasoned the matter correctly, and then deliberately draws a contradictory conclusion; in chapter 10. 8, after quoting the passage from the Psalms cited by the scribe to Jesus, he explains it exactly as previously noted (p. 193), thus "Sacrifices and offerings and whole burnt offerings, and sacrifices for sin thou wouldst not, neither hadst pleasure therein (the which are offered according to the law), then hath he said, 'Lo, I am come to do thy will'. *He taketh away the first that he may establish the second.*" The case could not be more clearly stated: God rejected sacrifices of all kinds even in the psalmist's day many centuries B.C. and required instead the "doing of his will", and yet Paul, having made this comment himself, continues most perversely in the next verse, "By which will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." When his hour was come Jesus prayed most earnestly for his disciples that God might "Sanctify them in the truth; thy word is truth" (John 17. 17), not that they might be sanctified through the offering of his body as a sacrifice to God, according to whose accepted word sacrifice had been replaced by the doing of his will. It "*God's word is truth*", then Paul's flat contradiction of it in this matter of salvation through Christ's sacrificial death and fictitious resurrection—on which he founded the whole Christian faith—is unquestionably false.

(r) Neither does Paul's doctrine that "our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ gave himself for us that he might redeem us from iniquity" (Titus 2. 14) offer any rational explanation of God's dealings with mankind. Paul frequently refers to God as the Father, but would any reasonable father kill an innocent son for the sins of the other children? And wherein consists this "salvation from sin" about which Christians talk so glibly? Sin may for our purpose be divided into three classes, (1) Offences against the community or our neighbours, such as are referred to in the latter half of the ten commandments: these offences are social matters dealt with in

the secular laws of all civilized nations and countries from time immemorial, which right-minded well-instructed persons voluntarily obey, and others observe from respect to public opinion, or through fear of punishment, but surely Christ's death—unheard of by millions who yet conform to these necessary regulations—cannot be expected to have any serious influence in preventing or condoning such transgressions; (2) Offences against ourselves, consisting of vice and bad habits generally, which are usually followed by natural punishment in the form of ruined health, wasted lives, remorse, and often premature death—undoubtedly the fear of these results affords an efficient restraint and means of salvation from such misdeeds for those who cannot act from the higher motive, that, "to do the right because it's right, were wisdom in the scorn of consequence", and if these motives fail, the belief in Christ's death on the cross as an atonement is not likely to act as a deterrent, nor can it mitigate in any way the above evil effects of such sins. (3) Lastly there are all those minor defects of nature or training, e.g. fits of temper, impatience, selfishness, pride, etc., which form the stock-in-trade of the confessional and priestcraft generally: rightly regarded the self-control involved in checking these "besetting sins" forms a desirable means of strengthening the mind or improving character, and it can scarcely be maintained that the deity would exact such a cruel atonement for blemishes inherent in every human being born into this world—even Christ admitted himself to be (Mark 10. 18), and is represented as being, by no means exempt from the above faults and failings. Common sense reasoning then confirms the divine precept that sacrifices and offerings for sin are futile, and that the only method of "salvation from sin" is such as man can and ought to work out for himself, by complying with those secular laws of justice and right, proved equitable and necessary through past experience, and further, by obeying that higher spiritual law of love and mercy recognized as most essential by enlightened seers and leaders of all nations. Paul, indeed, with his inbred pagan notions of vicarious sacrifice "reasoned with them from the scriptures opening and alleging that it behoved the Christ to suffer and to rise again from the dead" (Acts 17. 2, 3), but Jesus plainly declared this to be both unnecessary and inefficacious, "If they hear not Moses (i.e. secular law) and the prophets (i.e. spiritual law) neither will they be persuaded if one rise from the dead" (Luke 16. 31).

(u) This remarkable pronouncement by Jesus naturally suggests the consideration that since his sacrificial death, even though confirmed by such a convincing miracle as his resurrection, would admittedly have no effect on sinful men, God would scarcely have exacted, nor Christ have endured, a sacrifice that could never be universally, nor even generally, efficacious in removing sin and its evil consequences. If, indeed, it were true of Jesus Christ that, "in none other is there salvation, for neither is there any other name

under heaven that is given among men, wherein we must be saved" (Acts 4. 12), then the whole human race prior to the Christian era must be regarded as irretrievably lost, a conclusion which Paul frequently suggests quite complacently in such words as, "now once *at the end of the ages* hath Christ been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Heb. 9. 26). He does indeed maintain that "God spared not his own son but delivered him up for *us all*" (Rom. 8. 32), but this "us all" refers merely to fortune-favoured Christian converts, in accordance with his preposterous doctrine that this sacrifice would only benefit those specially chosen and fore-ordained by God. Further Paul, as we have seen, was fully convinced that he would live to see Christ return to bring the world to an end, consequently he must have considered that the entire effect of Christ's sacrifice could only be to save a very limited number of "God's elect" *chosen from one single generation*. And although Paul's expectation regarding the fulfilment of Christ's promise proved vain, and the world continued to exist as before for century after century down to the present, yet during all this time by far the larger part of the human race lived and died without even hearing Christ's name, notwithstanding Paul's words (Rom. 16. 25), "according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which hath been kept in silence through times eternal . . . but now is made known unto all the nations"; it is surely inconceivable that God should withhold the sole means of man's redemption "in silence through times eternal", and then provide it in such a fashion that it remained quite unknown and useless to most of the world's inhabitants even to the present day. In order to be worthy of the creator of all mankind the scheme of salvation should have come into operation towards the beginning, not the end, of the ages, it should have been available for all men, at all times, and in all places, it should have been in every way universal in scope: the true gospel of duty and love towards God preached by Jesus fulfils all these conditions of universality, whereas Paul's false gospel concerning Christ's atonement, resurrection, ascension and second coming was in no sense universal, for it was strictly limited to the elect of his own generation, and failed even in regard to them.

(e) Paul's teaching that Christ's death was an atonement for the sins of all those who accept it as such, has always been regarded by Christians as peculiarly exalting, since they claim that this faith ~~relieves~~ men of the oppressive burden of their evil deeds, strengthens and encourages them to lead clean, moral lives, and provides them with a comforting, if rather vague, hope that Paul's resurrection scheme may yet be realized in spite of previous failure. Now is that faith really exalting? The simple fact is that Jesus had adopted from the later Hebrew prophets a far more exalted and elevating conception of the one true, wise, and merciful God who was wholly uninfluenced by sacrificial offering or priestly ministration,

and merely required that men should do his will by living just, kind, and upright lives: this was the gist of the sermon Jesus delivered on the mount, this was "the good tidings of the Kingdom of God to preach which was he sent" (Luke 4. 43); on the love of this God and on its natural consequences, true and merciful dealings amongst men, "hang all the law and the prophets" (Matt. 22. 37-40), but the Pharisee Paul, in his system, replaced this exalting doctrine by the old degrading ecclesiastical worship of an implacable deity, only partially appeased even by the cruel sacrifice of an innocent human victim.

^f Usually the disciples of the great religious teachers quoted most reverently, exactly, and at great length from the discourses of their instructors, but this is very conspicuously not the case with Paul, who indeed thought himself fit to preach that "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" (Acts 9. 20, 22), without any preparatory training to speak of, without any personal knowledge of Jesus or his immediate followers, and with at most a very false or fragmentary acquaintance with his precepts and doctrines, since he violently persecuted those who adopted them. Although Jesus Christ impressed on his disciples that "one is your teacher and master, even Christ" (Matt. 23. 8, 10), yet Paul with the utmost self-assurance took this rôle upon himself, and by his dominating personality and intellectual attainments, succeeded in imposing on Christendom a debasing ecclesiastical system of Christolatry which has little or nothing in common with the true exalting teaching of Jesus. As already indicated Pauline Christianity displays all those faults which have been found inherent in the various forms of heathen religion, and is thus itself, for all practical purposes, an essentially pagan system; its ritual is taken unchanged from the idolatrous worship in the temples of heathen gods, every precept of importance in the Christian moral code is derived from pagan sources, and the Christian conception of the deity is fundamentally the heathen superstition of an immortal being, possessed of miraculous powers and human attributes, treating man capriciously, but mostly with unjust displeasure. Consequently, this angry deity, pagan, Jewish, Pauline, or Christian, required to be appeased by sacrificial offerings, preferably in olden days, offerings involving bloodshed, as in the case of Cain and Abel, for "all things are cleansed with blood; and apart from shedding of blood there is no remission" (Heb. 9. 22): this inevitably led to venal sacerdotalism, and, however disagreeable the task, we must now briefly trace the growth of this sacrificial ~~use~~, which, according to the infallible test supplied by Jesus, proves its corrupt nature by its deadly fruit.

Although "priestly offerings and ministrations can never take away sin" (Heb. 10. 11), yet the pernicious idea of purging sin in this way has been encouraged and employed by the priestly orders everywhere and at all times, in order to acquire wealth and power; the world's history is indeed very largely a record of constant

struggle against sacerdotalism with its inseparable greed, strife, and superstition, and the biblical narrative is a prominent example of this as regards the Hebrews. To the first legendary sacrifice is attributed the first murder (Abel's), and this sacrificial idea has deluged the world with blood ever since, without atoning for one sinful act. The earlier Old Testament books relate how galling was the sacrificial yoke imposed by the priests on the children of Israel in their uncivilized nomad state, and the later books were written by true "men of God", enlightened laymen, who earnestly strove to instil into the minds of the people more exalted views of God than were inculcated by the rapacious priesthood, and who were therefore persecuted to death by these "shepherds which fed themselves and not the flock" (Ezekiel 34. 2, etc.). Jesus followed in the train of these seers, and spent all his active life in fierce conflict with "the sons of those who slew the prophets" (Matt. 23. 31, 32), and "filled up the measure of their fathers" by crucifying him. Christians, deceived by the specious clause in their creed, do not realize that though, nominally, Christ "suffered under Pontius Pilate"—who did his utmost to save him—yet in reality he was killed by the anointed priests of "God's chosen people", for "the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus" (Matt. 27, 20). Moreover Christ's last words, before being led away to execution, attributed the sin of his condemnation chiefly to the head of the priesthood, the high priest himself (John 19. 11): on the priestly caste therefore falls the curse "his blood be upon us and on our children" (Matt. 27. 25), and truly the Church which bears his name has ever been deeply imbrued with the blood of innocent victims.

Jesus in his lifetime never planned any church or priestly organization, for his extremely simple religion required nothing of the kind: *he himself apparently never went into a temple to pray but only to teach unwelcome truth*; he did not ordain his apostles as priests, nor charge them to perform any "priestly office", they were simply to repeat their master's words, preaching exactly what they had heard from him. When however, he is reported to have accepted Peter's suggestion that he was "the Christ the Son of the living God", he is stated to have at once announced "I shall build my church" (Matt. 16. 18), and to have rewarded Peter by naming him as its foundation stone, and investing him with divine power and authority. Reasons that should readily convince any unprejudiced mind have been given for regarding this extravagant charge to Peter as an interpolation by the early Church (pp. 106, 167), but as the Christian Churches generally, and particularly the Church of Rome, depend largely on this as the warrant for establishing their ecclesiastical authority, they must abide by the consequences of assuming it to be authentic. What are these consequences? The three gospels which refer to this incident all agree in relating that immediately afterwards Christ turned on this

foundation stone of his Church and addressed the following malediction to him: "Get thee behind me, Satan, thou art a stumbling block unto me: for thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men" (Matt. 16. 23). Worse still, this foundation rock of the "Church of Christ", against which "the gates of Hades shall not prevail", yielded soon after to the taunts of maid servants, causing Peter to lie thrice, denying his master with oaths and curses (Matt. 26. 69-74). Nor was this all, for, later on, when this thrice perjured apostle took a prominent part in inaugurating the early Christian Church, he is credited with terrifying the people (Acts 5. 11) by miraculously killing two persons for telling a falsehood in the matter of a Church contribution—inevitably the Church which acknowledges its growth from such seed displayed the errors of its source by yielding similar evil fruit. The Christian Church, instituted for the worship of a glorified human being, "minded not the things of God", but during the whole Christian era has used every artful means at its disposal for acquiring temporal power by open violence and political intrigue, amassing wealth by selling "the consolations of religion", and exercising a terrorizing influence over men's minds by fostering superstitious fears and ignorance. It belied the truth as it is in Jesus, substituting therefor pagan notions of a sacrifice-exacting god, dooming men to eternal punishment unless they believed in miraculous violations of nature, conformed to heathen rites and sacraments, and paid requisite offerings to the Church. Finally this same Church arrogant here on earth, instead of using its grand opportunities and extensive influence to spread the gospel of divine love throughout the world, pursued for centuries a career of "hatred, strife, and all uncharitableness"; this led to the most abominable crimes, including wholesale massacres, with persecutions and tortures so diabolical that burning alive seemed merciful in comparison, while all the worldly goods of the victims were frequently confiscated by "mother Church", the only offence of those so treated being that, with magnificent courage and devotion to liberty of thought and freedom of action, they preferred to endure to the uttermost, rather than accept the errors of this pagan creed.

And the Christian Church of the present day cannot dissociate itself from complicity in these evil deeds; it boasts that it has inherited the doctrine, sacraments, and entire creed which tolerated and approved such wickedness; it has inherited the ill-gotten gains, the temples, lands, tithes and various sources of revenue; it has inherited the name, the organization, and the authority which enabled these horrors to be perpetrated before, and which may repeat them again (pp. 182-3); and it has inherited the spirit of bigotry and hatred which was responsible for these atrocities in past times, and nowadays, in spite of secular enlightenment, is responsible for incessant strife amongst religious sects and for thinly veiled but unrelenting opposition to scientific truth. The modern Christian ecclesiasticism which thus identifies itself with the barbarous

system and abominations that were officially sanctioned by its forefathers, the canonized leaders of the mediæval Christian Church, *must likewise share their blood-guiltiness ; this cannot be gainsaid by those who " profess and call themselves Christians ", for the argument is Christ's, and he himself is the accuser.* It was not to wicked sinners in the ordinary sense, but to God-fearing, devoutly worshipping, and most strictly moral leaders of the Jewish religion, who, like those of the Christian Church, " made void the word of God by their tradition " (Matt. 15. 6), that Jesus addressed his irrefutable argument and terrible condemnation, " Woe unto you who say ' If we had been in the days of our fathers we should not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.' Wherefore ye witness to yourselves that ye are the sons of those that slew the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. Ye serpents, ye offspring of vipers, how shall ye escape the judgment of hell " (Matt. 23. 30-33).

Does not this apply to the modern Christian Church, and has it not " filled up the measure of its fathers " to overflowing, by its attitude towards the war of Christendom ? Not only did the highest ecclesiastical authorities effect nothing in the way of stopping this insensate violation of every humane law, but the rank and file of the Church sent forth messages from the pulpits of all the warring Christian nations, encouraging those engaged in the bloody struggle, while priests even blessed the deadly engines of wholesale slaughter and destruction. *Moreover the Christian Church must be held directly responsible for not preventing this hideous orgy of bloodshed, since the religious training of these contending nations lay almost entirely in its hands, and instead of imbuing them with the spirit of true religion, which would have leagued them together in a bond rendering war between each other impossible, it propagated the worship of a human idol who " came to send not peace on the earth, but a sword "* (Matt. 10. 34). Had all the individuals comprising the various Christian nations been brought up to be really sons of God, the Father of all mankind, instead of bondslaves of militant Christian Churches, this shocking holocaust could never have occurred : and so again Christ's fierce denunciation is as bitingly applicable to the modern Christian Church as it was to the Pharisees of old, " Ye serpents, ye offspring of vipers, how shall ye escape the judgment of hell ? Therefore behold I send unto you prophets, wise men, and scribes : some of them shall ye kill and crucify, and some of them ye shall scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city ; that *upon you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth* " (Matt. 23. 33-35). Every man and woman, every Church, and every nation not actively endeavouring to prevent future war must share the responsibility for perpetuating this inhuman barbarity, which has never yet settled any dispute satisfactorily and, besides, being utterly futile, has become, through misapplication of science, appallingly destructive of life and property. It is a

bloody, beastly, brutal business, contrary to every human and divine law, and altogether unworthy of nations that pretend to be civilized.

" Were half the power that fills the world with terror,
 Were half the money bestowed on camps and courts,
 Given to redeem the human mind from error,
 There were no need of arsenals nor forts :

The warrior's name would be a name abhorred,
 And every nation that should lift again
 Its hand against a brother, on its forehead,
 Would wear for evermore the curse of Cain.

Peace ! And no longer from brazen portals
 The blast of War's great organ shakes the skies,
 But beautiful as songs of the immortals
 The holy melodies of love arise."

—LONGFELLOW, "The Arsenal at Springfield."

SUMMARY

In view of the importance of the subject the foregoing may be summarized by repeating that the ecclesiastical system, adopted in varying form by the Christian Churches throughout the Christian era, was founded by the Pharisee Paul largely after the Jewish pattern, so strongly condemned by Jesus : Paul indeed had no personal knowledge of Jesus, from whose TRUE teaching consequently his system differed in all essential respects. (t) It differs in Paul's pagan conception of the deity as an incomprehensible triune god, containing the carnal elements of Christ's reanimated body, seated on a heavenly throne beside the Jewish personal god, the implacable Jehovah—a false strife-provoking creed entirely at variance with the representation of the one true spiritual Father of all, depicted by Jesus. (r) Paul's scheme differs in demanding that men must have faith in Christ's disproved resurrection and ascension, and much other fabulous matter related in the accounts of Christ's life, whereas Jesus, in his pure teaching, makes no mention of all this incredible and irrational superstition, but on the contrary stated, "there shall no sign be given to this generation" (Matt. 8. 12), and when instructing his disciples in the gospel of the kingdom of heaven he clearly laid down that the sole, essential, and wholly rational condition of entrance into that kingdom consisted, not in faith of any kind but, in "doing the will of the Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 7. 21). (u) The Pauline system differs in restricting the divine scheme of salvation to a comparatively few Christian converts of those days, who, according to Paul, were predestined to take part in the unfulfilled promise of Christ's reappearance to that generation, whereas the spiritual teaching of Jesus is universally applicable at all times and in all places, for the doing of God's will has always been within the scope of all rational beings who know

good from evil. (e) Paul's scheme differs in representing God as requiring the cruel sacrifice of an innocent scapegoat, whereas Jesus frequently quotes with approval the expression that God "will have mercy and not sacrifice", and assured his followers that, "if ye forgive men their trespasses your heavenly Father will also forgive you" (Matt. 6. 14, 15). Permeating the whole of this Pauline theology is the fundamental pagan error of sacrificial atonement and offering for sin, which has always been exploited by the priestly orders in their own interest, since this is their chief source of wealth and power. Recognizing that this utterly false doctrine was inseparably associated with venal sacerdotalism Jesus condemned both the tree and its evil fruit; he ordained no priests himself, he cautioned his apostles against accepting any such offerings or rewards for their teaching, he fiercely attacked the whole Jewish ecclesiastical system on every possible occasion, and even opposed their sacrificial ritual in the sacred temple so zealously that he was, on this account, crucified by the priests, whom he defied to the very end, actually laying the guilt of shedding his innocent blood on the head of the chief priest.

The priest-ridden Christian world seems to have completely overlooked all these facts, seems to have forgotten the failure of the promise on which Paul founded his early Christian faith and Church, seems oblivious to the almost incredible depravity and cruel tyranny of Christian ecclesiasticism at the height of its power in the "Dark Ages", and now seems blind to its insatiable lust of wealth and power, to its perpetual discord, to its hostility towards scientific truth, to its total perversion of the simple teaching of Jesus, with consequently its complete breakdown in the recent world crisis, and its utter inability to cope with the social evils of the time. It is noteworthy that Jesus omitted priests from his list of messengers sent to enlighten the world (Matt. 23. 34), and it is indeed most remarkable that the founders of all the great religious creeds, and the world's wisest teachers and exponents of truth have been laymen, at variance with, and usually persecuted by, the priestly orders: this fact well deserves the attention of the ecclesiastically-minded who believe in the divine authority of the Church. It will be a glorious day for this sadly priest-ridden world when it learns to trust its messengers of truth, and to reject its "blind guides".

"When 'whelmed are altar, priest, and creed
And all the faiths have passed
Perchance from darkening incense freed
God may emerge at last."

—SIR WILLIAM WATSON.

Sooner or later Christendom may wake up to the above state of affairs and summon courage to throw off this ecclesiastical yoke, with everything comprised in the idolatrous worship of Christ,

and to substitute for these the truth taught by Jesus and all the wisest of the world's seers and philosophers, based on the simple facts of science, explaining nature's handiwork, and checked by godlike reason. It is hoped to make this clear in the ensuing outline of TRUE religion, for there is little use in exposing priestly error, and rejecting false superstition, unless these be replaced by divine truth.

PART III

UNIVERSAL

TRUE Religion

“ One breaking in upon us yestermorn,
With all the Hells a-glare in either eye
Yelled, ‘ hast *thou* brought us down a new Koran
From heaven? Art *thou* the Prophet? Canst *thou* work
Miracles? ’—And the wild horse, anger, plunged
To fling me, and fail’d.—Miracles! no, not I
Nor he, nor any. I can but lift the torch
Of Reason in the dusky cave of Life,
And gaze on this great miracle, the World,
Adoring That who made, and makes, and is
And is not, what I gaze on,—all else Form,
Ritual, varying with the tribes of men.”

—TENNYSON, “ Akbar’s Dream.”

CHAPTER VII

A GOSPEL ACCORDING TO WHAT IS *TRUE*

The creed of TRUE religion

The truth concerning God

"Our Father which art in heaven" (Matt. 6. 9).

"God is spirit" (John 4. 24, R.V. margin).

It is evident from the foregoing that the command, "I am the Lord thy God, thou shalt have none other gods but me," cannot be appropriated by any of the personal semi-human, sacrifice-exacting usurpers of godhood, acclaimed by the priestly caste in all countries and at all times. It has been shown that this claim to divine pre-eminence is equally false of all the gods of heathendom, of the purely national god of the Hebrews, and of the Christian conception of a godhead in which the reanimated body of Jesus Christ is assumed to be incorporated: after a trial extending over thousands of years, all these gods have ignominiously failed to establish their supremacy, and consequently their cult has either died out altogether or has forfeited the confidence of most earnest seekers after truth. The world's greatest religious teachers, philosophers, and men of science have repudiated these crude notions of miracle-working personal gods, whose favours can be purchased by prayers or offerings through ecclesiastical agency, and it is necessary now to point out what view of the Supreme Power these great minds might reasonably agree together should be universally accepted as the essential element of true religion.

Nowhere is the truth concerning God so clearly and completely expressed as in the extremely simple teaching of Jesus, which represents the deity as the heavenly Father; he quotes from Malachi in another connection (Matt. 11. 10), so perhaps he borrowed the simile from this prophet, who used it twice (Mal. 1. 6; 2. 10), and judging the prominence which Jesus gave to this idea it was evidently an entirely satisfactory expression of his conception of God. Let us try to penetrate the mind of Jesus and see exactly why this thought appealed to him so strongly. He had been trained from early childhood in the Hebrew scriptures, and feeling that his mission in life was to preach (Mark 1. 38) something more elevating than the lifeless formalism of the warring sects around him, he eagerly searched these scriptures for inspiration concerning the truth

about God (John 5: 39). We can picture the young student—his life saddened and his mind quickened by his own illegitimate birth—taking up the book to discover what explanation it had to offer of the nature of God, and of the eternal mystery regarding the presence of evil in a divinely ordered world. He unfolds the roll and is at once arrested by the powerfully striking opening words, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was waste and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep." What was the nature of this God existing under such appalling conditions? Surely it would be a horror unspeakable to believe that any sentient being could exist from everlasting in the impenetrable darkness of this void, where as yet neither the heavens nor the earth were formed! Much perplexed he continues his reading, "And the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters". . . We may be quite sure that Jesus paused here, pondering long and deeply with his finger pointing to those wonderful words, wherein lay the explanation he so earnestly sought and subsequently proclaimed. God was "spirit", meaning literally a "breath of air", such as ruffles the surface of still water, forms the spoken word, and is essential to light and life: and this spirit moved, spake, turned utter darkness into light, and out of apparent nothingness formed the whole material universe and all that lives therein. Jesus saw that, just as a father tends and cares for his offspring through all the stages of their growth, so this amazing spiritual power is represented as superintending all creation till each phase merited approval, and just as dutiful children repay a worthy father's care by loving obedience, and the family dwells together in harmony, so too the whole creation responded to the Creator's directions, and peaceful order prevailed in consequence.

But as the legend proceeds, this is all changed through man's failure to carry out his Creator's command, thus pointing the moral of obedience, which Jesus faithfully reproduced by teaching the supreme importance of "doing the will of the Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 7: 21). He must too have perceived, what biblical criticism has clearly revealed, that the narrative loses sight of this one true God, the spiritual creator, the heavenly Father of all, and abruptly substitutes another, under the new title of "Lord God" (Gen. 2: 4), who is represented as a personal being with grossly human attributes and activities (Gen. 3: 8, 21). Worse still, as the human population increased and men spread over the face of the earth, they collected into tribes and nations, and "every nation made gods of their own" (2 Kings 17: 29), representing their particular ideas of godhood by different mythical beings, whom they worshipped under various names, and proclaimed superior to all other gods. As a consequence every nation, trusting to the protection of its gods, waged fierce warfare on its neighbours, and, under the instigation of priestly leaders, invoked divine authority for indulgence in wholesale slaughter, plunder and persecution, as they

do to this day (see p. 201). The whole scriptural records of the Jehovah-worshipping Jews furnish a typical example of this pagan religious fanaticism, relieved only by flashes of poetic inspiration, as where the psalmists sing delightful praises to the 'God of nature, or the later prophets glimpse higher ideals of God than were represented by the cruel jealous Jehovah, on whose sacrificial offerings the venal priests waxed fat.

It is certain that Jesus placed this construction on his reading of the Hebrew scriptures, for he embodied all these ideas clearly in his teaching. It is remarkable how completely he ignored the personal national god Jehovah, never mentioning him by name, not even when he quotes the precepts attributed to him which he introduces with the words "ye have heard that it was said of old" (Matt. 5. 21, 27, 31, 33, 38, 43), and then refutes them in a way that he never would have done had he considered them divinely inspired by his "Father in heaven". Further his condemnation of temple sacrifices, ritual practices, Sabbatical observance, etc., indicates that he had no respect for the Jewish ecclesiastical system and forms of worship, and consequently no reverence for the mythical god who is represented as having instituted and approved them. On the other hand Jesus left no doubt about his acceptance of God as the Creator Spirit and Father of all: he describes him as the "Lord of heaven and earth", dwelling in heaven yet present everywhere, penetrating the inner chamber of the heart, seeing in secret man's innermost thoughts, ordering the whole course of nature so that the fields are clothed with grass, the flowers arrayed in more than regal glory, and not a sparrow falls to the ground without his knowledge. And lest anyone might be misled by the term "Father" and think that this amazing power is of a personal nature, Jesus is reported to have asserted positively, beyond all question of 'Yea' or 'Nay', that "God is Spirit" (John 4. 24). It must be pointed out here that the Greek word translated "spirit" is "pneuma", meaning "air", as in the English derivative "pneumatic"; there is no article before it, so it is not correct to translate it as "a spirit", but it is properly and literally translated "God is spirit" in the Revised Version margin, and is so expressed in both the French and German Bibles. Jesus used this perfect simile in order to explain to the ignorant Samaritan woman the real nature of that invisible, intangible, indivisible, impersonal, wholly immaterial and all pervading divine power, which created and controls the entire universe and is alone worthy of worship. In the previously mentioned questionnaire (p. 6s), which included 10,546 professing Christians, 9,991 admitted that they "believe in a personal god", and the extreme divergence of opinion which prevails concerning the nature of this divine personality, and the precise form of worship to be rendered to him, shows how entirely the Christian world has failed to grasp the all-essential truth taught by Jesus, that "God is spirit and they that worship him must worship in

spirit and in truth ". Those who sincerely realize this truth can have no religious disagreement with each other, for they are in no way concerned with the sources of religious strife, with false personal gods and their idolatrous worship, with priests and creeds, with sacraments and ceremonies; they worship not in any sacred mountain, holy city (John 4. 21-23), or consecrated temple, yet they have true religion, and are the " true worshippers whom the Father seeks to be his worshippers ". If the reader will pause, as Jesus and every other truth-finder has paused, until his mind thoroughly grasps the fundamental idea that God is an entirely impersonal all-pervading creative force or spirit—perusal of Psalm 139 may help him greatly in the process—he will then be able to realize, as Jesus realized, how false and degrading is Church ritual born of superstition, and on the other hand how sublimely TRUE is the purely spiritual worship of the purely spiritual God.

TRUE

" God is spirit " is true because this alone adequately describes the amazing power by which the entire universe was fashioned and is controlled: Spirit alone accounts for all the attributes and activities associated with what is called " God "; spirit alone could exist in the utter darkness of the pre-creation void, before and after all worlds, eternal in the heavens; spirit, which alone is essentially creative, could evolve light from the horror of great darkness, and produce the material world out of apparent nothingness, spirit alone, eternal, invisible, impersonal, indivisible, intangible, all-creating, all-pervading, all-inspiring spirit, could maintain the orderly sequence of nature prevailing throughout the whole universe.

RATIONAL

" God is spirit " agrees perfectly with rational deductions from the discoveries of modern science as set forth in Chapter 1. *there is not the slightest difference between the attributes of the creative spirit enumerated in the preceding sentence, and the properties of primary radiation as previously described, for this ethereal essence of all the energy and matter of the universe is likewise eternal, invisible, impersonal, indivisible, intangible, all-creating, all-pervading, and all-inspiring.* Neither is there any difference in their activities, for just as the " spirit moved ", causing darkness to become light that marked æonian days, in which stage by stage the regular order of nature was first established and then maintained, so too primary radiation *moved* and, by its progressive emission of energy, gradually and quite naturally resolved during successive æons first into nebular light, and then into all the forms of energy and matter which at the present day continue this unceasing evolutionary process. The inevitable rational conclusion is that the scriptural and scientific

conceptions of the supreme creative power are mutually confirmatory, are in fact absolutely identical.

UNIVERSAL

"God is spirit" is the only universally admitted religious tenet accepted alike by ignorant savage and theological scholar. We have seen that this idea of God was whispered by nature in the ears of primeval man, and persisted throughout all the pagan creeds, though concealed and distorted by being embodied in idols and mythical deities. For example it was the essential doctrine in the earliest Hindu scriptures (p. 67), and through them dominated all the religions of the far East, though this exalted teaching is rigidly confined to the initiated, the bulk of the people being grossly idolatrous. And now we see that it formed the real teaching of Jesus—who clearly borrowed it from the Hebrew version of the pagan creation legend—although here, too, the Churches of Christendom have almost stifled this spiritual truth by preaching the ever popular doctrine of a personal god. *If East and West alike would repudiate the idolatrous worship of false gods, idols or deified beings, and adopt instead the doctrines of their most venerated religious teachers, they would find themselves in complete agreement as worshippers of the true universal creative spirit.*

EXALTING

That "God is spirit" is the most exalted and exalting conception of God was proved by Jesus who, using his test of a tree being known by its fruits, pointed out its elevating effect in replacing mere temple ritual by true spiritual worship. It is indeed just because this spiritual conception of God is so exalted that it is by no means acceptable to ordinary uninstructed minds, and the consequence is that the ignorant layman is ever ready to endorse the psalmist's words, "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it. Whither shall I go from thy spirit?" (Ps. 139. 6, 7). The Churches, claiming to possess this knowledge, instead of explaining this spiritual truth, have everywhere taught the people to seek refuge from the spirit of God in gross superstition and idolatrous worship, for "the priests bear rule by their means, and the people love to have it so; and what will ye do in the end thereof?" (Jer. 5. 31). But the experience of the world's three greatest religious exponents proves conclusively that spiritual enlightenment of the very highest order is not produced by theological training, nor by the acceptance of cut and dried dogmas, nor by observance of ecclesiastical rites and sacraments, but is the natural outcome of earnest thought in the endeavour to elicit intensely desired truth. (t) Buddha, Jesus and Mohammed were, all three, laymen, who rejected with scorn the religious preachers

and teachings of the reputed learned and holy men of their day, preferring to seek out the real truth for themselves : (r) all three re-discovered this age-long truth by prolonged inward reasoning and meditation in communion with nature—the most reliable theological study, since nature is God's own handwriting, which none can forge, and all, particularly young children, can read with ease and delight if they will : (u) All three reached the same universal conclusion best expressed in the words of Jesus, " God is spirit," for this really comprises the Mohammedan formula, " there is but one God ", while its sequel, that " they who worship this spirit God must worship in spirit and in truth ", is merely a simpler expression of Buddha's complicated way to the Great Peace (pp. 227-8) : (e) and finally, all three were greatly exalted by the result of their solitary musings, and, recognizing it to be TRUE, felt themselves inspired thereby to preach this lofty spiritual ideal, which, in spite of much associated error and superstition, has never ceased to exercise a great influence for good in the world. And the earnest seeker after truth to-day must follow their example closely : by fearlessly rejecting the false trappings of the modern creeds, and by reasoning the matter out quietly, even uneducated men can see for themselves, what primeval man saw, and the ignorant savage of to-day sees, that *the eternal God of all creation must be spirit present everywhere and in everything, including therefore themselves* ; when the full meaning of this universal truth is thoroughly understood it cannot fail to produce a powerfully exalting effect according to the measure of the minds and circumstances of those who realize it. Rightly considered it has the power to satisfy philosophic and intellectual minds, as it satisfied the high-born, cultured Buddha, leading them, as it led him, to the great spiritual Peace. Rightly considered it can supply true religious solace to all who are wronged, oppressed, and suffering in mind or body, as it solaced the base-born Jesus, " the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief ". Rightly considered it can appeal to the ignorant, superstitious, and the uncivilized as it appealed to the illiterate, idolatrous and turbulent mind of Mohammed, leading all, as it led him, to the knowledge that there is but one true God.

It may be said then that the statement " God is spirit " is TRUE, for it describes the Supreme Power most accurately, it agrees with the rational conclusions of modern science, it is the only universally acceptable view of God's nature, and it is so exalting that it is able to evoke the loftiest thoughts of which the human mind is capable : *without any doubt this must be the chief corner-stone of TRUE religion.*

* * *

Before passing on, some attempt must be made to explain the relation between the Supreme Power and the existence of evil, for this has at all times presented a formidable difficulty to religious thinkers, perhaps through failure to realize all that is meant by

God being spirit. According to old legends the prince Gautama, destined to become " the great god " Buddha, was so tormented by observing the manifold evils of life that he relinquished all the luxury and comforts of his palace, and, assuming the rôle of a mendicant and hermit, sought for long weary years to find the solution of this mystery. Jesus, too, as suggested before, was probably impelled by the same motive to seek in the ancient creation story for a conception of God consistent with the presence of evil in the world. This evil has existed throughout the prolonged throes of universal birth, throughout the wild turmoil of the elements preparing our earth for habitation, through terrestrial upheavals and subsidences, through fire and deluge, through alternating ages of tropical heat that bred strange forms of life, and of intense cold that destroyed them, through long, long periods when " the dragons of the prime tare each other in their slime ", and brutal savagery reigned supreme on the earth. And at the present day, though the cosmic forces are reduced to a comparatively tranquil state in our world, and a stage of tolerable equilibrium has been reached, yet still evil is inextricably associated with every phase of life, though this seems to be the consummation of the creative process. Thus life only comes into being through maternal pain and anguish, it is only maintained by a constant struggle for existence, entailing the ruthless destruction of weaker forms ; its highest expression in man's intellectual power is dearly purchased at the cost of innumerable mental disorders consequent on his highly strung and easily deranged nervous system, whilst life's fleeting joys are coupled with sorrow and disappointment ; health is undermined by sickness or creeping senility, and over the whole short span of existence hangs the ever-present menace of impending death. Nor does the future hold out any hope of improvement in this state of things, for we have seen that the ever-working process, which reduced chaos to this seeming fair world, must apparently inevitably produce its extinction in the more or less remote future, thus forcing the conclusion that evil, from the human point of view, seems invariably predominant in our present *material* universe, from its cradle to its grave. These are hard significant facts which cannot be ignored and be it noted that all the above evils from which creation suffers are not due to any sins or faults of man, but are altogether outside the scope of his actions and control : these original evils existed long before man appeared on the scene, they are shared by all the sinless animal world, they afflict the helpless infant, the innocent child, and men of good and noble character as well as the wicked and depraved ; they are inherent in nature everywhere and at every period. All this seems to confirm the rational verdict of science that the creation of the universe, with its innate vicissitudes of good and evil, far from being the handiwork of a personal omnipotent god, intolerant of evil, is simply the outcome of entirely impassive cosmic forces, which,

like every other natural force such as heat, electricity, etc., are neither good nor evil in themselves but are all derived from one common source, and work undeviatingly, producing what is called good and evil according to circumstances.

Evolution, as roughly described in the first Chapter, furnishes a natural, intelligible, and satisfactory explanation of the perpetual conflict between good and evil; on the other hand it is contrary to plain common sense that an omnipotent, omniscient, benevolent personal deity should deliberately spend millions of years fashioning and controlling such a "sorry scheme of things entire". Those who invoke the "God from whom all blessings flow", and who request him to "incline their hearts", to "have none other gods but him", are compelled, willingly or unwillingly, to assume the existence of another personal deity responsible for all the natural evils of creation. Although this is the orthodox view of Christendom, yet such invocation of opposing gods of good and evil is simply paganism, the recognition of false mythical personal gods, offering no rational solution of the origin of evil, acceptable only to minds warped by child-taught superstition, dishonouring to the creative spirit, and debasing to man through its evil fruit of venal ecclesiasticism, it is thus in no way TRUE, and so is totally at variance with the worship of God the spirit, in spirit and in truth. This unexplained divine responsibility for the existence of evil lies at the root of most religious scepticism and pessimistic philosophy, and has inspired much melancholy poetry, reaching high water mark perhaps in Tennyson's "song of woe".¹ "Are God and Nature then at strife?" the poet asks, since "Nature red in tooth and claw" shrieks against man's hopeful creed, and then he repulses his own question with the lament, "What hope of answer or redress? Behind the veil, behind the veil": not till the final verse of this long dirge does he draw aside the veil and reveal *the true explanation*.

"That God which ever lives and loves
One God, one law, one element,
And one far-off divine event,
To which the whole creation moves."

This one God, one spirit, one absolute all in all, cannot possibly be at strife, for there is nothing else to strive with; it is not merely one of two opposing principles, for if it be really universal it cannot be either good alone or evil alone, it must comprise all that is good as well as all that is evil, neutralizing them, as it were, by unifying them: consequently these terms, good and evil, only apply to our human view of the relations existing temporarily between the component parts of the material universe, they have no significance of any kind as regards all-embracing spirit.

Minds imbued with orthodox superstitious beliefs in a personal benevolent god and a personal devil, in heavenly angels and fiends

• ¹ *In Memoriam*—especially sections 54 to 56.

of hell, and in the phantoms of sorcery, will find it difficult to realize the truth concerning the one universal spirit, but the following considerations may help those so disposed in "giving diligence to keep the *unity* of the spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4. 3). Take for example spirit in its literal sense, meaning 'air'. We cannot imagine this by itself to be at strife, though when it is set in motion by outside forces it may become either good or evil, or if it be divided into its constituent elements nitrogen and oxygen gases, these are indeed opposed to each other, but then in this separate state they cease to be 'air'. So too in the old creation legend there is no mention of good or evil in connection with the creator spirit and the primeval void, but when the various stages of creation take place, they are pronounced "good", implying the co-existence of evil in nature from the very beginning of the material world. For instance, the first creative effort produced light which was declared to be good, and therefore darkness to be evil, and no doubt this is so, generally speaking, from the present human point of view: nevertheless this first light consisted (p. 15) of life-destructive radiations from the primal nebula, not yet condensed into suns and stars, moon and earth, consequently in this form it scarcely merited the description "good", especially as at that time there was no material world on which to exercise influence of any kind, while, later on, in the reduced form of solar radiation, it became the source of all terrestrial energy both good and evil alike. Further, nocturnal creatures would not agree that darkness is evil and light good, and darkness may be very beneficial to the vegetable world by producing a necessary rest from the incessant activity induced by light. Seeing then that the terms "good" and "evil" are misleading even in reference to the light and darkness of our natural world, it is not surprising that they cause utter confusion if applied to pre-creation, where darkness prevailed, for then we must conclude that the spirit which created and appreciated light existed before all present worlds, shrouded as it were in evil, in profound darkness, unrelieved by even the faintest glimmer of light. Surely the truth is that good and evil in relation to light and darkness only apply to their effects on our terrestrial life, and have nothing to do with the creative spirit, regarding which the psalmist asserts "darkness is no darkness with thee, but the night is as clear as the day; the darkness and the light to thee are both alike" (Ps. 139. 11 C.E. Prayer Book version).

By similar reasoning it can be shown that the term "good" used in regard to all the other stages of creation represents a very one-sided view, for "we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now" (Rom. 8. 22), and seems destined to continue so till its final extinction. But even if we take the optimistic view that the creation of matter in all its forms was good, then the pre-creation condition was evil, and what shall be said of the god which animated it? This whole scheme of things

is indeed altogether inexplicable on the assumption of any personal creator, either good or evil, for even if we admit that such could exist in pre-creation chaos, we cannot conceive a good omnipotent god tolerating such evil conditions, nor an omnipotent evil god creating an even partially good world, while if two conflicting personal gods existed, then it is evident the evil one predominated, and seems bound to prevail in the future as in the past. Such is the unsatisfactory result of man's idolatrous endeavour to frame his gods on personal lines, and endow them with his own mundane standards of good and evil.

The only rational way to explain why the supreme power permits the existence of evil in the world consists in acknowledging the simple truth that "God is spirit", *all-embracing* spirit, endowed with purely spiritual attributes, consequently quite unaffected by physical influences such as light and darkness, and so perfectly free from the conflict between good and evil that it becomes what Buddha called "the Great Peace", even the divine "peace which passeth all understanding". This conception of the Absolute All in All is fully explained and confirmed by the scientific evidence already adduced, indicating that the entire universe was originally composed of "one element" or primary essence, which, by radiation, became resolved into all the various forms of energy and matter, the ever-changing balance between these being automatically readjusted in a way that seems to us sometimes good, sometimes evil, but that is invariably in accordance with the "one law" regulating the whole evolutionary cycle of nature, by which, it is at least possible, the "one God", the universal spirit, is achieving some ultimate purpose (p. 256).

The foregoing remarks embrace all that we call good and evil universally throughout the entire natural world, and they therefore include man's particular application of these principles to his own perpetual life struggle, but as this question of right and wrong has such immense practical importance in daily life, the above main ideas in regard to it may be expressed in the following jingling lines.

ALL'S RIGHT

When viewed aright
Our life's a fight,
A constant fight
To get things right,
To get things, do things, keep things right
Or what at least we think is right.

.
But what is right?
For what's not right
Oft seemeth right:
E'en priests of right,

Unerring popes, can deem it right
To torture, maim, and burn for right.

Are prophets right,
Kings, Kaisers right,
Divinely right,
By whose false right,
Not peace on earth, but swords find right?
Their countless victims groan "Not right."

No! War's not right
And might's not right,
Or only right
When aiding right
By means of right—Might fighting right
Can ne'er be, ne'er be, ne'er be right.

And wrong's not right,
Yet wrong ^{is} right
Not yet made right,
'Twill be made right
And right is right,—for ever right,
Thus all is right, though all's not right.

Life's fight is right,
If all our might
Be used aright
To make wrong right.
Striving for right is our birthright,
And strifeless right our true deathright.

The whole question of man's real relation to the universal spirit forms the subject of what follows, so the present Chapter may be concluded with some verses by an unknown writer, who had evidently fully grasped the truth of the simple, yet most profoundly wise, definition, "God is spirit".

GOD AND I

God and I in space alone,
And nobody else in view
"And where are the people, O Lord?" I said,
"The earth beneath, and the sky o'erhead,
And the dead whom once I knew?"

"That was a dream," God smiled and said,
"A dream that has ceased to be true
There are no people, living or dead
No earth beneath and no sky o'erhead
There was only Myself and you!"

"And why do I feel no fear," I said,
"Meeting you here this way?"
For I have sinned, I know full well,
And is there heaven, and is there hell,
And is this the judgment day?"

"Nay, those were but dreams," the great God said,
"Dreams that have ceased to be."
There are no such things as fear and sin,
And you yourself—you have never been;
There is nothing at all but me."

—The Pillow Book.

CHAPTER VIII

A GOSPEL ACCORDING TO WHAT IS *RATIONAL*

Ceremonial excluded from TRUE religion.

The truth concerning immortality.

"God is spirit and they that worship him must worship in spirit and in truth" (John 4 24)

"Hallowed be thy name" (Matt 6. 9).

"These things I speak in the world that they may have my joy" (John 17 13)

As long as the statement "God is spirit" remains merely a familiar Bible phrase, or an expression of truth approved by all profound thinkers, it will only continue as heretofore to be for most people a meaningless definition without any driving force behind it, just as wireless waves meant nothing to the ordinary man until broadcasting became general and receivers were installed in private houses. But when science steps in, confirming the existence and revealing the nature and method of operation of this intangible impersonal creative spirit, then what was previously an ineffective, unrealized, almost unheeded, abstraction becomes a recognized factor in our lives, an actual reality that must be grasped and utilized by reason, forming thus an essential element in *TRUE* practical religion.

TRUE

Reason can indeed furnish exactly the same explanation of man's spiritual nature and relation to God as it has already supplied in regard to the fact that "God is spirit", with the result that it becomes a comparatively simple matter to establish direct communication with the supreme power, provided all disturbing influence can be eliminated. We have seen that Jesus ascertained his truth by studying carefully how God revealed himself to primitive man as the Spirit which created all the works and controls all the operations of nature, and we have shown how completely this conception of spiritual creation agrees with the scientific data regarding primary radiation and evolution. Similarly we have now to show how in all probability Jesus learned from the same source that man too is endowed with this spirit, that this idea is likewise in conformity with scientific data, and that consequently the perfect

statement of Jesus, quoted above, "they who worship God the spirit must worship in spirit and in truth", represents the true relationship between God and man, leaving no loophole of justification for the idolatrous ritual of the Churches.

Let us then link ourselves once more with the young Galilean student as he pores over the ancient record. His face is aglow with the discovery that God is not a mere semi-human god of a petty nation, but the eternal spirit, the heavenly Father of all. He has followed the whole account of the amazing process of creation: he has tried to realize thoroughly in his mind that the spirit, which painted the green grass and arrayed the lily of the field in all its splendour, had not only poured the water into the great lake, and piled up the immense rocky masses of the adjacent mountains, but was likewise the creator of the sun and moon, and "made the stars also"; even though Jesus knew nothing of the wonders of modern science, yet all this seemed to remove this God a long way off. Jehovah was indeed a capricious sacrifice-exacting deity, but there was a certain satisfaction in worshipping before his own specially consecrated altar and in his own temple; he was at least approachable, comprehensible, and perhaps appeasable; but this impersonal, all-pervading, all-inspiring, spirit seemed too awful to contemplate, utterly remote from man and his petty affairs, altogether inconceivable. Why did this spirit God create man with mysterious cravings for higher spiritual things, and yet only endow him with animal senses which could in no way satisfy his vague yearnings? Why? The young reader's finger, which had followed the written account of creation line by line, halts abruptly at verse 27, "God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him." What did this emphatically repeated expression, "God's image", convey to the puzzled mind of Jesus? He had convinced himself that God was spirit, with no more bodily image or likeness than a breath of air (*spiritus*), and so the clouded young face lights up again with inspiration as the true meaning of the words flashes into his mind, *God the spirit "making man in his own image and likeness" could only mean that God endowed him with his own spirit*, and we know that Jesus adopted this idea, for he expressed it himself when he used the same beautiful simile of air to explain the identity of man's spiritual nature with that of God the spirit, "the wind bloweth where it listeth . . . so is every one that is born of the Spirit" (John 3. 8).

The idea that human beings are endowed with God's own spirit cannot, however, be admitted into rational religion merely on the strength of the legendary statement, approved and adopted by Jesus, that "God made man in his own image" even though both the legend and the pure teaching of Jesus have alike been shown to be in the main TRUE, yet this is not enough, for what they affirm in this case is so vitally important that some special rational confirmation is requisite and necessary. The matter in question,

involving as it does man's claim to eternal life, must, then, be reasoned out reverently, cautiously, and yet quite fearlessly : *reverently* because, like the ancient Roman gladiators, we, who are all fated to die, are permitted first to salute the Supreme Power, and may then *A s k* whether the divine purpose of creation includes immortality : *cautiously*, because we must *S e e k* out carefully our real relationship with the Infinite, since "strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matt. 7. 14) : *fearlessly*, because by rightly applying our reason to known facts we are using God's own appointed guide, employed by all earth's great ones, to *K n o c k* at the door leading into all truth, and we are well assured that this "shall be opened unto us" (Matt. 7. 7).

We begin with a very simple logical statement concerning "the chief corner-stone of TRUE religion", referred to in the last Chapter (p. 212), where reasons were given for accepting the definition "God is spirit" as in every way TRUE, being particularly in strict conformity with scientific data ; this means that the Supreme power is as all-pervading as air (spiritus), "is over all, and through all, and in all" (Eph. 4. 6), consequently the inevitable conclusion is that man's whole being, like all creation, must be permeated by this ubiquitous spirit. The rationalist, the philosopher, the truly scientific mind can all agree with this quite general conclusion, though of course they object to impersonal spirit being designated "God", which, when written with an initial capital letter, and referred to as "he" or "him", implies a personal deity ; moreover they may also cavil at such use of the word translated "spirit", meaning "air", since air is a mixture of material gases, which can be liquefied and handled, whereas its scientific equivalent previously referred to as "primary radiation" has no such material existence, but is the pre-nebular ethereal essence of universal matter and energy, from which all is evolved and to which all seems destined to return. The scientific sceptics are thus in reality more truly spiritual in their ideas than either the worshippers of personal gods, or more particularly than the spectralists, misnamed spiritualists, who are so completely ignorant of what spirit means that they impiously claim to see, handle, photograph, take finger-prints of, and play all sorts of tricks with, the apparitions they call "spirits", presumably detached fragments of the universal Spirit whose desecration, according to Jesus, constituted the unpardonable sin (Matt. 12. 31).¹

RATIONAL

Seeing then that even the most materialistic mind can regard all the varied products of creation as bearing the impress of the creative power or spirit which brought them into being—in other words as being endowed with what are vaguely called spiritual characters—

¹ For the above reason these sorcerers are usually referred to in this book as "spectralists".

the next step is to ascertain exactly what this implies in the case of man, and whether he can claim to be specially favoured in this respect. The statement that "God created man in his own image" is sufficient and conclusive for our purpose, but care must be taken to discern its real meaning—for here "the letter killeth but the spirit giveth life"—and then to test its truth. Interpreting the phrase according to the letter would simply mean that God, and man, and man-like apes are all modelled on the same physical pattern, and man has always accepted this idea of God's image, because it has enabled him to represent his gods in his own likeness, to endow them with human attributes, to house, approach, and worship these personal deities, as the pagans of all times have done, and as they have taught the worshippers of Christ and Buddha to do. But the spiritual explanation accepted by Jesus is based on the actual fact—confirmed by science—that the creative power was quite impersonal, as formless as air, and therefore described as "Spirit"; consequently the expression "made man in his own image and likeness" must signify in the words of Jesus, "he that is born of the spirit is spirit". This is clearly the only correct interpretation possible, and it seems to supply a rational, satisfactory, and evidently true answer to all we are seeking to find out.

There can be no doubt regarding the main character of the divine spirit, as depicted in this first chapter of Genesis, for this is entirely concerned with creation, the supreme power is therefore essentially creative, with all that this implies. For example creative power includes imagination and forethought in conceiving ideas regarding the proposed objective, *reason in planning out all details of construction*, knowledge of the material available, power and skill to handle this, capacity for remembering and applying past experience, goodwill to fashion the work truly, correct judgment to gauge the worth of the result, etc., and without going into intricate questions of comparative psychology, is it not a matter of common knowledge that man does in fact possess all these components of the divine creative power to an exceptional extent, at least suggesting his exclusive divine kinship and authority? The succeeding verse (Gen. i. 28) shows clearly that this special endowment conferred on man—or, in scientific parlance, man's attainment to a higher stage of evolution—enabled him to "subdue the earth . . . and have dominion over every living thing that moveth upon the earth", yet this power depends neither on any physical advantage, such as the possession of some special sense, exceptional bodily vigour, activity, or muscular strength, in all which he is actually inferior to many brutes, nor on any occult spiritual attribute, mysterious psychic force, or faith in the supernatural. Let a robust spiritually-minded missionary, alone and unarmed, meet a hungry lion or tiger in open country, and it is quite certain that the brute in this case will exercise dominion over the man: on the other hand put into the same position a most ungodly worldly-minded weakling,

armed with a loaded rifle and with skill to use it effectively, and he will prove his mastery over the man-eater by sending a bullet into its brain or heart.

In fact man's superiority over the rest of creation depends on his complicated creative power, dominated by reason, as described above: for example in this case he can foresee the possibility of meeting the savage beast, and can design and construct weapons or traps for protection, constantly improving these as experience teaches him; or again he can anticipate the need for future supplies of food, plan out the necessary agricultural processes, fashion the requisite implements, and in general invent ever more and more efficient means of turning the forces of nature to his own ends. Now all such creative processes are the product of man's higher mental activities, the combined working of which—known comprehensively as his reason—presents considerable resemblance to that of the universal creative power. Are they not both alike immaterial, intangible, invisible forces? Do they not both work by the same gradual evolutionary method, assuring that each step is good before proceeding further? Is it not true that they both benefit by past experience and improve through repetition with variation? Are they not both altogether exceptional in being able to anticipate the distant future, and provide for coming events even years previously. Finally, does not their mastery of the natural world prove undeniably that they have the same divine origin? Surely then it may be admitted that man is indeed specially "made in the image of God" the divine spirit, being alone endowed with a full measure of this creative spirit; or as it might be expressed philosophically, man is the highest product of evolution, his creative abilities enabling him to be apparently the only consciously active exponent of the universal evolutionary process.

The reader was previously recommended to pause until he had completely grasped the full significance of the fact that "God is spirit", and now he is again advised most earnestly to repeat the process in regard to this second equally fundamental truth, that *man too is endowed with this same essentially creative spirit, dominated by reason: rational religion is wholly unattainable until this truth is as thoroughly familiar as any obvious fact can be.*

Reason is our spiritual receiver, installed within "every man that cometh into the world", and we can either ignore it altogether, use it for mere worldly affairs, tune it to receive only ecclesiastical waves which Jesus said "are not of God" and consequently leave men to "die in their sins", or we can establish it as our permanent bond (religio) which unites us with the Supreme Power, making us "one with" the source of all truth and life. In this most important matter of our direct union with God, faith is entirely out of place, for it is not a divine attribute at all, and plays no part in divine creation: according to the old legend God could not use it himself, being the universal spirit, nor did he exact it from his creatures

who *knew* him face to face, and knowledge eliminates faith ; but these first human beings did *not know* the serpent's wiles and consequently faith in his lies caused their downfall, which would have been avoided had they used their reason. So too there is no blessing pronounced on faith in the opening verses of the sermon on the mount, because its rational precepts were not matters of *belief*, but reasonable truths to be *known* and practised, thus contrasting sharply with Paul's eulogy on that faith in irrational miracles and illusory hopes which still constitutes the Christian superstition. On the other hand no one questions the fact that reason most assuredly is a divine attribute, being indeed the chief component of that creative power which is the essential character of God the spirit ; and as man is specially endowed with this creative power it follows that reason is the main factor in his god-likeness, and his natural link of divine union.

Reason however can only work on a basis of known facts, and fortunately this requisite material is available in abundance, since the overwhelming evidence adduced when investigating the nature and evolutionary working of the universal creative spirit is all logically applicable to man's particular share therein. For this very reason we began (p. 13) by tracing out the source and operation of the vast power which formed and controls the entire creation, followed it through its progressive stages of evolution, and observed how it expresses itself in all the matter and energy throughout the universe, and particularly how life in its manifold phases is a direct manifestation of this all-pervading cosmic radiation : and now we see how the highest development of vital activity, in the form of human intellect, reveals its origin by working in the same invisible elusive manner, along similar evolutionary lines, achieving like creative ends, and exercising comparable world dominion. In whatever way we view the matter, however we may express it—whether we prefer the simple legendary statement that the creative spirit made man in his own image and likeness, or its paraphrase by Jesus that everyone “ born of the spirit is spirit ” like unto the fetterless wind, or the philosophic concept of an absolute all in all, or the plain scientific fact that all forms of matter and energy, including man's varied mental activities, are products of primary radiation, *the inevitable rational conclusion is that man's exclusive creative spirit, embracing all the highest powers of his mind, dominated by reason, is essentially identical with the universal creative spirit from which it emanated.* Once this is accepted as an indisputable fact, then religious difficulties seem to vanish : the door at which reason has been knocking is thrown wide open, revealing the truth we are seeking, particularly as regards immortality and our real relation with the infinite.

But a caution is necessary to prevent disappointment : rational religion makes no appeal to the emotions through the bodily senses, after the manner of priestly ritual and sorcery ; it has no beautiful

consecrated temples admitting a soothing "religious light" through stained glass windows, no decorated altars, nor graven images, nor sacred pictures, no odours of incense, no attractive music of bells and organ and choir, no polished oratory of sanctimonious robe-bedecked priests, no mysterious rites and sacraments, neither does it make any efforts towards spiritual intoxication by crystal gazing, hypnotic states, hysterical trances, and all the sorcerous tricks employed by spectralists in their dark room séances. There is nothing truly spiritual in this sensual worship, nothing exalting in those alluring enchantments: all these expressions of pagan idolatry and heathen sorcery merely gratify artificial æsthetic tastes, false religious feelings, and perverse ideas of worship, or produce temporary superstitious fervour, a "devotional spirit" beneficial only to church coffers, and morbid excitement mistaken for inspiration, but all this from beginning to end is in flagrant opposition to rational religion, which consists in worshipping, or rather knowing, "God the spirit in spirit and in truth". Minds trained from early childhood in the above theatrical ritual and superstition will naturally reject the following unadorned revelations of reason, and yet these represent the loftiest spiritual ideas ever evolved by the human mind, are vouched for by clear authentic statements of Jesus, are in strict conformity with scientific data, and form the main structure of TRUE religion.

UNIVERSAL

Let us then apply our reason to previously recognized facts in order to discern what is the real truth concerning immortality. *We know* that God is spirit, universal, impersonal, air-like spirit, characterized essentially by its rational creative and world controlling power: *we know* its unvarying method of working, *we know* the result of its activities, and, what particularly concerns us here, *we know* that this spirit is immortal, surviving even conditions that annihilate all the elements of matter. Our acceptance of its everlasting nature does not depend merely on the biblical statement that the creative spirit existed in the pre-creation void, nor on this being a doctrine taught by the profoundest philosophic thinkers, but *we know* it to be true because the whole of our previously stated scientific data points to this creative power being inherent in primary radiation, actuating the evolutionary mechanism of this "scheme of things entire", and balancing the beginningless, endless cyclic interaction of radiation and matter. Call it God, call it creative spirit, call it reason (p. 233), call it the absolute all in all, call it the flywheel of primary radiation, most assuredly such exists, for without it the elements of our actual universe could not have assumed their present orderly form and course: undoubtedly then it is no mere poetic fancy to say that "birthless and deathless, and changeless remaineth the spirit for ever".

We know further that all rational human beings are born of this spirit, not merely inheriting its breath of life which we share in common with all living creatures, but being endowed with higher mental faculties, the creative workings of which are akin in all respects to those of the supreme power, and are capable of raising us far above the rest of the animal world, establishing our dominion indeed over the earth and all that is therein : and knowing all this we cannot avoid concluding that *our perishable bodily frames are in fact animated by the immortal universal spirit.*

But does this justify us in claiming personal immortality? Those who maintain that Jesus taught divinely-inspired truth can answer this question in his words : on the most solemn occasion of his life when he found himself face to face with death, he too turned towards his Creator and, saluting him with the simple appropriate title of " Father ", uttered the ever memorable saying which has brought hope and comfort to countless death-stricken sufferers, " This is life eternal—to *KNOW* thee, the only true God." If this be true then the rationalist, *knowing* all the facts emphasized above, has more right to claim eternal life than the adherent of the Christian *faith* (p. 156) ; at least the exponents of rational religion may well ignore this superstitious faith in incomprehensible mysteries and accept instead the plain reasonable statement of Jesus that life eternal is simply knowledge of the Creator. But as we are now treating specially of the universal aspect of rational religion, we must apply our conclusion in a strictly universal sense ; that is to say, the statement that our perishable bodies are animated by the immortal universal spirit does not, and cannot, mean that all men's bodies are possessed of individual separate spirits, for the very words " universal spirit " both imply that what is meant thereby is no more capable of division than is air. Nevertheless this delusion concerning human spirits prevails everywhere, because it affords men the alluring hope of personal immortality, and a sort of ghostly reunion with their loved ones whose earthly bodies have reverted to dust in death's relentless grasp. Now not only does the old creation story make no mention of man being endowed with such an immortal spirit, but it actually states definitely that God took special precautions to prevent him acquiring eternal life (Gen. 3. 22-24), and all through the Old Testament historical narrative even Jehovah's most devoted and highly favoured servants are represented as being rewarded only by temporal blessings, while the occasional references to individual spiritual existence merely occur in association with primitive legends, superstition, or poetic fancy.

Further there is no mention of such independent spirits in the *pure teaching of Jesus* contained in the sermon on the mount, where he promises his followers " ye therefore shall be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect ", and the idea of a separate spiritual existence is directly contradicted by his literal interpretation of

the word "spirit" as "air", "The wind bloweth where it listeth; so is everyone that is born of the spirit" (John 3. 8). The whole teaching associated with *the Christ* is indeed entirely concerned with the destiny of individual human spirits in a future eternal existence, expressed in various ways, (t) in the false promise attributed to Christ, that he would reappear in the clouds of heaven to judge that generation, separating the good spirits from the evil for ever (Matt 25. 31, etc.), (r) in the most irrational parable representing eternal awards to the wealthy Abraham,¹ to the other rich man, and to Lazarus, all alike unmerited (Luke 16. 19, etc.), and in (u) Paul's fallacious descriptions of the universal resurrection of all dead "natural bodies" so as to become "spiritual bodies" (1 Cor. 15. 44), which he stated he would live to see, and which (e) Christians are still taught to believe since it is the necessary preliminary to their debasing lottery of heaven and hell. but all these Christian perversions of the pure teaching of Jesus have been shown to be in no way TRUE.

We are in fact dealing here once more with the well-nigh universal pagan error of personifying the spiritual, an error which has never ceased to lead the world astray, and is now reducing professing Christians and spectralists to the level of the most ignorant savages steeped in magic and spirit worship. All alike are the pitiable victims of superstitious faith in wholly imaginary spiritual beings and their supposed human mouthpieces, priests, mediums, and witch-doctors, etc., to an extent indeed that they consider this world to be "compassed about with so great a cloud" of these spiritual witnesses as to make it a question for serious public discussion whether there is elbow-room for all these ghosts in space.² The representatives of the various Christian sects who gave their views on this ridiculous question might have found the correct answer in John, chapter 17, which no doubt they would accept as authentic and authoritative: *there Jesus, inspired by his own impending death, reveals the whole mystery of spiritual existence, without the slightest reference to the main Christian doctrine of soul salvation and a future individual eternal life acquired by faith in his sacrificial atonement on the cross, in his alleged resurrection from the dead, and bodily ascension into heaven.*³ He states that, simply to know God and to do his will is life eternal—eternal in the past

¹ See p 169. footnote.

² This question proposed in a letter to the daily press provoked the answers subsequently published in the book entitled *Where Are the Dead?*—see footnote p 71, and heading to Chapter V.

³ There is indeed one important mention of Christ in the obviously spurious passage in verse 3 (Page 127), but even if this were genuine both this statement and the words "believe on me" in verse 20 come under the explanation common to all such references in this gospel—they signify not the person of the messenger but his spiritual message, as proved by the words of Jesus himself (p. 123).

as much as in the present and future—and as he himself knew God (v. 25), and glorified him on earth by doing his will (v. 4), therefore he has the glory of being one with God's own self even "before the world was" (v. 5). Note this particularly because he prays for *exactly the same union in the case of his disciples*: he had tried to teach them also to know God (v. 6), had given them his word (v. 14), which they had kept (v. 6), and so he prays, "Holy Father, keep them in thy name which thou hast given me, that they may be one even as we are" (v. 11), although still continuing their separate bodily existence in the world (vs. 11, 15). Further he prays for *exactly the same union* in regard to their converts, repeating the expression over and over again so that there may be no mistake: "I pray for them that they may all be one, even as thou Father art in me and I in thee, that they also may be in us" (v. 21), strengthening this by adding "the glory which thou hast given me I have given unto them; that they may be one even as we are one" (v. 22), and even this is not enough emphasis on this complete union with God, for he continues, "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be perfected into one" (v. 23). *It is evident from all this that in the pure teaching of Jesus, immortality was simply perfect union with the indivisible all-embracing source of life, the one everlasting universal spirit.*

This universality of spirit was fully recognized, many centuries before Jesus was born, by the profoundly wise compilers of the original Hindu scriptures which form the basis of Brahminism and Buddhism: according to these Vedantic writings (p. 67), Purusha and Prakrit, representing spirit and matter, emanate from Brahma the Universal All, into which the enlightened Oriental is convinced he will eventually be re-absorbed—like the dew-drop gliding from the lotus leaf into the water of the lake from which it originated, as the official Buddhist formula represents it. The very close resemblance between the pure teaching of Buddha and that of Jesus in regard to this matter is well illustrated by comparing the following description¹ of the passing of the Buddha, with the inserted gospel references, and with the above quoted swan-song of Jesus (John 17). "There is nowhere anything more wonderful than how, at the end of that long good life, he entered into the Great Peace for which he had prepared his soul. 'Ananda,' he said to his weeping disciple, 'do not be too much concerned with what shall remain of me when I have entered into the Peace, but be rather anxious to practise the works that lead to perfection; (Matt. 5. 44-48, "Love your enemies . . . ye therefore shall be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect") put on these inward dispositions that will enable you also to reach the everlasting rest'. (Matt. 11. 28, 29, "Come unto me . . . and I will give you rest . . . learn of me . . . and ye shall find rest unto your souls.") And again: "When I shall have left life and am no more seen by you, do not

¹ H. Fielding Hall's *Soul of a People*, Chap. III.

believe that I am no longer with you. You have the laws that I have found, you have my teachings still, and in them I shall be ever beside you. Do not therefore think that I have left you alone for ever" (John 14. 18, 23, "I will not leave you desolate: I come unto you . . . if a man love me he will keep my word: and my Father will love him and we will come unto him and make our abode with him"). "And before he died 'Remember,' he said, 'that *life and death are one. Never forget this.* For this purpose have I gathered you together; for *life and death are one.*'" (Compare this with the above remarks on John 17, where Jesus states he gives his followers perfect union with the Father, so that knowing God they have eternal life (v. 3) now and always; to all such, earthly life and death are in reality one.) "And so 'the great and glorious teacher', he who never spoke but good and wise words, he who has been the light of the world, entered into the Peace."

As the early sages who compiled the Vedas deduced their fundamental doctrines from prolonged meditation on the processes of nature, it is not surprising to find how completely the modern scientific study of natural phenomena has confirmed their general conclusions. There is no need to repeat here how primary radiation evolves into all the energy and matter of the universe, how matter through its ultimate resolution into electrons merges into energy, how life in its highest and lowest forms is simply this universal energy acting in an ordinary way through varying types of ordinary matter, all alike having the same common origin, undergoing the like cyclic evolution, achieving one ultimate destiny, "passing through nature to eternity", and how all this, rightly interpreted, enables us to realize the profound truth underlying the vague superstitious ideas that dominate the various religious creeds. Scientific facts reasonably considered, and spiritual religion separated from superstitious falsehood, alike indicate that "God is spirit", the one, universal, everlasting, creative spirit, endowing man with special powers, so that, being "born again" of this spirit, he inherits its attributes, shares its immortality, and becomes in all respects "one with" this divine, all-pervading spirit.

EXALTING

The doctrines concerning the existence of a personal god and of individual immortal human souls, have been ingrained into the Western religious mind until they are actually regarded as the main objects of religious faith,¹ whereas in reality they are altogether contrary to TRUE religion; these doctrines are indeed entirely opposed to all pure spiritual teaching such as that of Jesus, which not only supports the foregoing rational truths, but exhibits in a wonderfully exalting manner how these truths represent our real relation to the supreme

¹ See questionnaire, p. 68, in which 9,991 admitted belief in a personal god and 10,161 stated they believed in personal immortality.

power. Take his definition "this is life eternal, that they should know thee the only true God" (John 17. 3): how is it possible for anyone to know God so intimately as thereby to enjoy eternal life? The answer given by Church-taught Christians is to deny the possibility of such knowledge: in accordance with their official creed they hold tenaciously that God is a personal being, or rather an incomprehensible union of three incomprehensible persons, of which only one is spirit, and this mysterious godhead, being unknowable, must be first accepted through faith—in unreliable writings and their unreliable interpretation by most unreliable and divided Christian Churches—and then worshipped according to pagan ritual, with the superstitious notion that this will secure their eternal life in a heavenly paradise. Naturally such orthodox Christians cannot claim a share in the eternal life which Jesus stated so positively consists in knowing the only true God: if they want to be quite certain about this let them consider the very explicit answer to the question given by Jesus himself, "God is spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and in truth" (John 4. 24); surely there can be no more rational and exalting expression of man's real relation to God. Note the incontrovertible assertion—confirmed by science—that God is spirit, and therefore *not* a person or combination of persons: note too the rational consequence of this, that all men, even the most ignorant and un-intellectual, are assumed to possess this spirit, and to be able by its means to commune with the divine spirit; and note also the suggestion that men need not necessarily—even indeed, should not (v. 21)—worship God at all, but granting that they do, then short, sharp, clear, absolutely decisive is the statement that "*they must worship in spirit and in truth*". There can be no possible mistake about that utterance: the axe is laid at the very root of ceremonial worship, and with one grand sweeping blow the whole corrupt tree of idolatrous and venal ecclesiasticism, that for ages has intervened between man and his God, and set him at variance with his fellow-men, lies prone on the ground. And what vast clouds of theological dust are raised and dispersed by this direct spiritual union of God and man! Creeds crusted over with error—doctrines dying, dead, and decayed—rites and sacraments—prayers and penances—mouldy faith in mediæval myths, miracles and sorcery—all these and their kind, treasured up in cobwebby, superstitious brains, transmitted from generation to generation, causing interminable strife, hindering truth and progress, and doing an endless amount of mischief, all these must vanish when the words of Jesus take effect, and must be replaced by true rational spiritual religion. Jesus in fact told the Jews plainly, and through them the whole religious world, to destroy their pompous temple worship, and let him substitute his simple system, which required neither temple, nor priest, nor altar, nor personal worship of any kind, but only a perpetual hallowing of God's name in the inmost sanctu-

ary of the heart—a perfect spiritual association with God the spirit at all times and in all places.

Jesus declared this spiritual state to be natural in children and only attainable by child-like minds (Matt. 18. 3), and this is clearly TRUE. (t) We have indeed found this idea of spirit to be the essential truth in all primitive religions, originated by Stone Age savages and their successors, from their crude observations of nature, and this idea is quite familiar to children, who people their wonderful world of Babyland with giants and fairies and hobgoblins and invisible beings of all kinds. (r) The child of the wilderness, the wild red Indian, before he became a victim of Christian civilization, had reasoned out himself that there is one Great Spirit dominating all things, who makes the forests grow, keeps the streams flowing, and provides endless supplies of deer and buffaloes for food and clothing. (u) Children readily recognize that this universal spirit must be within them, for as a matter of fact, during every moment of conscious life, both children and adults are well aware of its promptings, directing our thoughts, words and actions, though mostly we fail to realize that "it is not we who speak but the spirit of our Father that speaketh in us" (Matt. 10. 20). We feel it is there though we can't touch it, we picture it as an inner self but we can't see it, we can listen to it suggesting ideas, but not in audible words, we know it is the all-important part of our being, our very life itself, yet it seems separate. Little children if much alone are apt to "talk to themselves", but sometimes a spiritually-minded little wiseacre may explain this by saying: "I finks, mummy, I talks Dod, and Dod talks I," and as we shall see presently he has reason on his side. Let us therefore adopt the advice of Jesus to "become as little children", and accept the little theologian's idea that the universal spirit is really within us, unceasingly inspiring our whole lives: surely this is the way in which it is true of children that "their angels do always behold the face of their Father which is in heaven", and surely too this was the truth which Jesus thanked God was hidden from the wise and understanding and revealed unto babes. This was the truth that Buddha and countless others spent years and years of their lives vainly seeking everywhere, until they finally discovered it within themselves; "the truth came to him (Gautama Buddha) at last out of his own heart. He had sought for it in men and in nature, and found it not, and lo! it was in his own heart. . . . Every man carries it there. . . . The truth for each man is in his own soul",¹ as Jesus said: "the kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17. 21). This truth is the very essence of universal religion, for it is the religious birthright of all rational human beings everywhere but, unfortunately, most children are soon deprived of it by false religious training and by contact with the world. (e) Obviously if the child knows "God borned him", as one youngster described it, and if

¹ H. Fielding Hall, *Soul of a People*, p. 39.

his attention is directed to the divine spirit within constantly telling him what to do, he will soon realize that he is always in the presence of a heavenly Father, with all that this implies. And as he grows older and observes nature intelligently, he will learn what spirit really is, that it is indivisible into fairies and human spirits, but pervades all things everywhere, and he will understand the joy which Jesus wanted all his followers to feel (John 17. 13), the joy and glory of being one with this universal immortal spirit (vs. 5, 22), in short he will "know the only true God whom to know is life eternal" (v. 3).

All this is extremely simple and is what might be called natural or intuitive religion, well suited to the undeveloped child mind, to primitive man, to the uncivilized savage, to the uneducated peasant, and to all without much knowledge or reasoning power: in fact this childish religion is nothing else but knowing God in spirit, and most unfortunately for the world the disciples of Jesus never really attained this knowledge as shown by his last prayer on their behalf (p 128). They altogether failed to understand what he so frequently impressed on them, that he was only divine by virtue of "the truth which he heard from God" and doing it (John 8. 40, 29), and this all men may hear and do if they will. They never grasped the spiritual meaning of his words, for even after his apparent death and recovery they thought he had come back to overthrow the Roman yoke and "restore the kingdom to Israel" (Acts 1. 6), and to the very end they continued to preach the personal Christ whose body was crucified, revived, was supposed to have ascended into heaven, and was expected to return from thence. Like their adopted colleague, Paul, they "determined not to know anything save Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Cor. 2. 2), and the consequence is that all through the succeeding centuries to the present time Christendom as a whole likewise turns the person of the messenger into an idol, and completely ignores his message that, "God is spirit; and they that worship him must worship in spirit and in truth."

This lamentable misdirection of the spiritual teaching of Jesus, combined with all that has been said previously concerning the similar pagan personifications of spirit, and the widespread spectralist failure to recognize the unity of spirit, all this shows clearly that attempts to worship or rather to know God "in spirit", are extremely liable to degenerate, with the help of interested "blind guides", into mere faith in false creeds, gross superstitions, and occult mysteries, unless they be strictly controlled by reason: this is evidently what Jesus meant when he most wisely added that God must also be worshipped "in truth", for truth can only be discerned by reason. It is indeed obvious that the above knowing God in spirit is the natural religion of children and the simple-minded everywhere, but children grow into rational adults, primitive man evolves higher intelligence, savages become civilized, the

masses of the people in the various countries of the world are becoming more educated, and all this enlightenment evokes an imperative demand for convincing proof of our spiritual union with God, in other words man's awakened and better instructed reason, which is his God-given guide in all things, requires to be satisfied that his spiritual intuition is indeed true.

But if man is "to worship in truth", this at once raises our initial enquiry (Foreword), "What is truth?" Jesus anticipated this question of Pontius Pilate when he prayed, a few hours previously, that his disciples might be "sanctified in the truth—*THY WORD IS TRUTH*" (John 17. 17), so that evidently to know God "in truth" is effected through hearing his word. Over and over again in this gospel of John, Jesus maintained that he had received this word from God himself, although it is plain that he reasoned out his message of truth in his own mind when very young he is stated to have reasoned about the truth with the reputed learned doctors of the temple, but, as in the case of the Buddha, Omar Khayyam,¹ and countless others, the results did not encourage him to repeat the proceeding. We have watched him extracting the truth from the world-old creation legend, we have seen how his mind was deeply influenced by the philosophic truth underlying all oriental religions, we note his frequent deductions from observations of nature, and we know that he meditated over these matters earnestly and for long periods in solitude. By this time-honoured method Jesus evolved his particular expression of truth—that he who knows the only true God the spirit, both in spirit and in truth, is one with the glory of this universal immortal spirit from everlasting to everlasting—and this product of his twenty years reasoning, from the facts at his disposal, seemed to him so wonderful, so beautiful, so true, that he accepted it as a divine revelation direct from God. His truth was no imaginary message from heaven,² nor was it the crazy figment of a superstitious mind artificially exalted to a state of perfervid ecstasy or hysteria, but was an intuitive perception of truth suggested by thoughtful study of all available data, carefully and intelligently tested by reason, and thus recognized as divine revelation, as the very word of God: "Thy word is truth."

The whole gospel of John is largely concerned with this "word", with this truth which Jesus heard from God through his reason,

¹ "Myself when young did eagerly frequent
Doctor and Saint, and heard great argument
About it and about: but evermore
Came out by the same door as in I went"

—"Rubaiyat."

² The legend of the celestial revelation at Christ's baptism (Matt. 3. 16), and the appearance of a "dove out of heaven" witnessed by John (John 1. 32-34), are both completely refuted by the simple fact that the baptist sent a little later to Jesus, asking for information about the very thing which the voice announced, and the dove was sent to indicate (Luke 7. 19).

and, in the opening verses, where it is written with an initial capital letter, "the Word" is actually identified with God. Now it is a most remarkable fact that the Greek expression "logos", translated "Word", is just as correctly used to signify "reason"—as in its English derivative "logic", the science of reasoning—and the standard Greek lexicon¹ states that when used in the New Testament it "comprises both senses". Unfortunately even the Revised Version gives no indication of this alternative rendering, so that readers of the English Bible (and the same is true also of the French and German versions) must generally be totally ignorant of this extremely important point; but if they refer to the place indicated (John 1. 1, etc.), and read these verses, substituting "Reason" for "the Word", they will be able to verify that the following rendering, which at first seems so strange yet so true, is equally correct. "In the beginning was Reason, and Reason was with God, and Reason was God. Reason was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Reason, and without Reason was not anything made that hath been made;" and similarly in verse 14, we read "And Reason became flesh and dwelt in us."² When therefore Jesus reasoned out his message as indicated above, he did in fact literally receive it from God, and the same may likewise be said of all truth revealed by means of well-founded reason—it is all divine.

What a flood of light this throws on the rational aspect of TRUE religion, and how strongly it sanctions our use of reason, rather than faith, in all religious questions, actually compelling us to refer them to this "God within us"! Instinct, intuition, imagination, inspiration may be credited with attaining truth at times, yet they will most certainly lead us astray unless dominated by reason; but divine reason must be supplied with necessary facts and this is where science and TRUE religion join hands. If the modern scientific mind objects to the term "God" as representing creative spirit, and regards the previously described uniform evolutionary process as only a mathematical formula, mere mechanical action, the purely automatic working of one universal law, then this is

¹Liddell and Scott, Abridged Edition, 1920, under "lógos" Section III.

²Translating the Greek word "en" by the usual, "in", instead of "among", removes the impression that this verse refers to Christ's person. The whole passage may then be read as follows, adhering closely to the Bible wording as can be seen by comparison.

Divine Reason (Logos) "is the true light which lighteth every man coming into the world" (v. 9). "It was in the world and the world was made by it, and the world knew it not" (v. 10). It came to men of reason who received it not (v. 11), "but as many as receive it have power to become sons of God, believing on his name" (v. 12), i.e. on the Logos or Divine Reason, and are thus "born not of blood nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (v. 13), the creative spirit, the Logos, whose Reason then inhabits the flesh, and "dwells in us (and we recognize its glory as being of divine origin) full of grace and truth" (v. 14).

just an inadvertent admission that "in the beginning was Reason", working out the formula, designing the mechanism, and framing the law. But while admitting this, science must rightly protest that this reason was "in the beginning" before matter was evolved, and was therefore wholly impersonal, that like all the various forms of energy it was inherent in primary radiation, and that therefore it was universal, eternal, a power to be recognized and investigated, *but by no means a personal deity to be worshipped*.¹ Granting this indisputable proviso, science could then admit further that this pre-creation reason, being rational, must likewise have arranged for the effective operation of its formula, its mechanism, its law, by securing the creation of all things necessary for this purpose, and also for its more or less permanent continuance, as evidenced by the universally adopted cyclic process. In fact science ought to admit readily that, "all things were made by reason, and without reason was not anything made that hath been made", that too, "reason was with" the creative power, guiding, controlling and *dominating* it, and that therefore "reason was" the supreme power before this world began, and is still the innate influence regulating the whole system of universal evolution, with mathematical accuracy, mechanical precision, and by unalterable law, as we see it doing in the external world around us, as we can feel it striving to do within us.

SUMMARY

Science and true religion being thus in complete agreement as regards this most fundamental matter of the real nature of the supreme power, we may sum up in the following TRUE statements how this same supreme power, this divine reason, rejects debasing superstition, and supplies religion instead with irresistibly convincing, and most exalting, truth. (T) There can be no truer conception of God than as the one universal creative spirit, the source of all matter and energy, existing from everlasting to everlasting, and this was originally reasoned out by primitive man, from his rough observations of nature, has been generally accepted by the wisest thinkers and seers of old, and is fully confirmed by rational interpretation of the most advanced modern science. (R) The inevitable rational deduction from this is that such impersonal creative spirit must be dominated by equally impersonal reason, which is there-

¹ It is necessary to emphasize this because the plausible argument that evidence of design in the universe proves a personal Creator—which was used by Cicero in connection with the heathen gods of ancient Rome, and was adopted by Paley and other Christian theologians—still survives in the popular catchword that "a watch implies a watchmaker",

fore the supreme power that primarily designed, and now controls, the entire universe, directing it along its orderly course. (U) The application of these data enables us to perceive that the whole scheme of the universe is fashioned in accordance with one vast comprehensive process of universal evolution, governing all forms of matter and energy in an orderly manner which fully confirms, nay, compels, the conclusion: "In the beginning was Reason, and Reason was with God, and Reason was God:" we have tried to trace out this process roughly as far as is known, and have found it quite reasonable throughout, so, rejecting faith in the supernatural, we are able to know the only true God in deed and in truth. (E) But this knowledge based on scientific facts must be confirmed by knowing God in spirit, which simply consists in recognizing that we discern truth through our own reason, the wonderful creative power which enables us not only to think and make and do innumerable things, but also to prove them all by testing whether they conform to the all-pervading TRUE design. In every moment of our conscious existence we are aware of this truth-discerning power within, for though it is not perceptible through any of our senses, yet it dominates our whole lives, is in fact our real life, our real self, which thus has all the attributes and activities of rational creative spirit, and can therefore be nothing else but the universal rational creative spirit working within us. In this way our truth-discerning spirit, or reason, reveals its own identity with the Supreme power, and we actually know God in spirit, we realize the astounding fact that God is indeed within us—in the words of Jesus, we are "born again, born of the spirit" which existed before the world was, we have eternal life. There can be nothing more exalting than this, and yet it is sober truth, based on a rational interpretation of sound scientific facts, and on the most authoritative religious teaching.

"By their fruits ye shall know them." To be thoroughly imbued with this knowledge of our spiritual union with God the spirit must, naturally, have a far more beneficial influence on practical every-day life than mere faith in personal gods, or their earthly representatives, saving mysterious human souls through idolatrous temple worship. The sweetly reasonable voice of TRUE spiritual religion is very different from the clamorous voices of the innumerable sects and creeds, which have kept the world in a state of perpetual discord and strife throughout the ages to the present day. Rational religion, knowing no ties of nation, language, or creed, must unite the whole human race, the dead, the living, and the yet unborn, in one common bond of spiritual brotherhood, since it teaches that all alike are really and truly "one with" the eternal God the spirit, here and now and always. Such, when expressed quite impersonally, is the rational conclusion to be drawn from modern science, such was the solace imparted by the Buddha as he passed into the Great Peace, "life and death are one, never forget that"

and such too, with an added note of triumphant joy, was the farewell message of Jesus, "This is life eternal, *to know* the only true God," and to be "one with" this spirit "in spirit and in truth": "These things I speak in the world that they may have my ~~joy~~ fulfilled in themselves."

CHAPTER IX

A GOSPEL ACCORDING TO WHAT IS *UNIVERSAL*

The tenets of TRUE religion *Truth that can regenerate all worlds*

"Thy Kingdom come" (Matt 6. 10).

"These things have I spoken unto you that in 'God's word' ye may have PEACE" (John 16 33).

THERE can be no doubt that this restless striving world is urgently in need of the peace of TRUE religion such as we are trying to outline, but the strangle-hold of priestcraft, and the prejudices and vested interests of the Churches, present an apparently insurmountable barrier against the introduction of anything of the kind: still, "great is truth" and it may yet prevail in the long run. "Church people" do not realize how their minds have been so warped by early training that they actually have never had any choice at all in the matter of religious belief. It is exactly as if their knees were firmly bandaged throughout their childhood, and then at the age of puberty they were told they could decide whether to remain stiff-legged or walk with free joints. It is therefore most earnestly urged that all children alike should be preserved from sectarian stumbling blocks (Matt. 18. 6, 7) by being trained up in the complete freedom associated with universal religion, until they are old enough to judge for themselves in the matter: since universal religion only contains the essential truth common to all creeds, and favours no form of ceremonial worship, there can be no reasonable objection to such training, which alone can ensure that genuine unprejudiced religious choice which is everyone's birth-right. "Church people" do not see that their cherished rites, sacraments, and superstitions, which they have been drilled into regarding as "requisite and necessary to salvation", are the very factors which split mankind into fiercely opposing sects and creeds, and so breed "envy, hatred, malice and all uncharitableness"—fruits which clearly prove the falsehood of these things. History furnishes a continuous record of families, tribes, and nations, rent asunder by these wholly extraneous matters, and of "militant Churches" committing the most barbarous atrocities in propagating belief in legends, dogmas, and practices that are no part of true religion. Even nowadays sectarian bigotry and intolerance are everywhere rife in a smouldering state, ever and anon blazing

up fiercely, and this chaotic condition of the religious world, throughout the ages, is a standing proof that every Church is simply an institution for fostering religious strife, and that ecclesiastical principles are directly opposed to true universal religion, the whole object of which is to promote the spirit whereof the fruits are love, joy, peace and perfect freedom. "Church people" do not understand that all forms of religion past and present, however different they may appear externally and however hostile to each other they may be, do possess in common certain fundamental truths, which are their only essential and really vital parts, representing the true spirit of religion, which Jesus came to preach, while he condemned unsparingly mere outward observances. Furthermore, just as these common fundamental truths are not the cause of the enmity which exists between religious faiths and sects, so also they do not give rise to any hostility between science and true religion; the truths of science and the truths of genuine religion cannot possibly disagree, for truth can only conflict with falsehood. These fundamental truths, common alike to science and genuine religion, are few yet all sufficient, being not only true but pre-eminently reasonable, world-uniting, and elevating to mind and character; moreover, they can be so simply expressed and applied that they are most suitable for the instruction of the young amongst all classes, creeds, and nations. These priceless truths, weighed in the balance and found TRUE, may be thus briefly summarized.

TRUE

There exists one supreme all-creating and controlling power, impersonal, intangible, invisible, eternal, and dominated by reason, known to science as primary radiation, to theologians as the divine Spirit, to oriental mystics as the impersonal world spirit Brahma, to Mohammedans as the only God Allah, to philosophers as the Absolute All in All, to the red Indian savage as the Great Spirit, and to Jesus as the heavenly Father who is God the Spirit—all these expressions have essentially the same significance, for all alike are merely designations indicating recognition of a Supreme Power, possessing all the characters universally attributed to creative spirit. The existence of this power is the first universally acceptable truth, and there is no disagreement concerning this, provided the idolatrous temptation to materialize, incarnate, or personify the purely spiritual and impersonal, be avoided.

RATIONAL

The first tenet of TRUE religion is, then, "God is spirit", and the second is similar, viz., Man, being born of this spirit, is the same spirit. Logically this is undeniably true if God be the universal creative spirit, for the absolute all in all must necessarily embrace

every part of creation, and when tracing out the entire evolutionary process, we have seen this to be actually true. But apart from this unity common to all creation, the profoundest religious thinkers regard man as having a more intimate union with the universal spirit, or rather as being able to realize this union, to feel himself constantly influenced thereby, and to co-operate consciously therewith, in a way denied to all the rest of creation. We have in fact found that man's highest mental attributes and activities, when rightly employed, are identical with those of the creator spirit, being dominated by the same truth-revealing reason, working in the same invisible, elusive manner, along the same graduated evolutionary lines, planning, achieving, creating, probing the past, anticipating the future, and generally directing and controlling his immediate surroundings, even as the eternal spirit does with the entire universe. It is therefore a logical conclusion, a scientific fact, a religious dictum, and sound psychology, that man's inner rational conscious self is, or can be, "one with" the creator spirit, "one with" the supreme power which exists before and after all worlds.

UNIVERSAL

The third fundamental truth is that this supreme power, being rational, created and regulates the universe in a perfectly consistent uniform and orderly manner, recognized by science as the unvarying process of evolution, regarded by thinkers generally as the ordinary course of nature, referred to by the piously-minded as "the workings of divine Providence", and described by Jesus as "the will of the heavenly Father". Here again all these various expressions have precisely the same meaning, and there is not the least room for disagreement between science and religion in regard to this fundamental principle provided that the harmony of this orderly control be not disturbed by the introduction of miraculous and superstitious elements. These are contrary to reason, common-sense, and to the experience both of reliable history and everyday life: they are antagonistic to science, the exact results of which are entirely dependent on the unvarying regularity in natural forces and processes; they find no place in pure religious teaching, notably that of Jesus who condemned "mighty works" as being "iniquity" contrary to the will of the Father; and lastly, they are derogatory to the supreme power, "with whom is no variableness neither shadow of turning" (James I. 17), by imputing to it caprice and inconstancy, thus completely destroying the otherwise uniform scheme of the universe or kingdom of God, rendering any intelligent understanding of it impossible, and producing thereby endless confusion, discord and strife. The miraculous in any shape or form, being directly opposed to the orderly arrangement of nature everywhere and at all times, is consequently subversive of true universal religion.

EXALTING

This leads to the fourth universally acceptable truth, for this consistency prevailing throughout the entire universe enables men of science, observers and thinkers generally to understand somewhat of the wonder-workings and underlying purpose of the Infinite, and, having acquired this exalting knowledge ('scientia'), surely none can question that it is binding ('religio') on mankind to conform therewith, in other words, "to do the will of the Father in heaven", "lest haply we be found even to be fighting against God" (Acts 5. 39): this provides a very effective and exalting moral code which will be discussed in the next chapter. By uniting these four fundamental truths the whole essentials of TRUE religion can be expressed in a single sentence. *there exists one eternal, all-pervading, rational creative spirit or power—with which god-like man alone apparently can consciously unite—governing the universe in a consistent uniform orderly manner, with which all must comply.*

This comprehensive statement, if rightly interpreted and generally applied, contains all that is necessary for the much-needed reformation of the religious world, but how can its universal adoption be secured? It is only a question of the simplest possible and quite inexpensive education universally instilled at the right time and in the proper way. Even quite young children can grasp, more readily than adults, the idea of a spirit Father who makes all the animals and flowers, the sun, the moon, and the stars, telling them all what to do, and the child himself can be gradually taught to recognize that his own thoughts are in reality God's silent voice directing all his actions: this is simply the above formula stated in accordance with the child mind, but a few day's Church instruction can destroy such a mental outlook, for all that child's life. If the religious instruction of children everywhere, during the first few years of life, were restricted to this simple doctrine, and to character-forming influences of all kinds—indicated generally by boy scout ideals and methods—and if their increasing desire for further religious knowledge were satisfied by plain straightforward explanations of God, creation, and our relation thereto, along such lines as here suggested, entirely free from all superstition and idolatrous ceremonial, then for the first time in the world's history a new generation would grow up familiar with genuine religion, which would then rapidly displace the sham article now supplied by the Churches. Unfortunately, however, all the world over, children's minds are perpetually doped with superstition, with unintelligible Church doctrines, prosy catechisms, parrot prayers, and impossible creeds, taught by mothers, nurses, and priests or their representatives; thus we mostly grow up without any knowledge of genuine religion, and quite unaware that our truth-discern-

ing reason, the spirit by which "we live and move and have our being", if rightly used, is our real religion, i.e. union with God, for it is nought else but the living God within us, caught as it were in the meshes of our flesh and blood existence, like rays of sunlight refracted on by glass. The glass may be a plain sheet through which all the light apparently passes unchanged, or it may be frosted and so absorb or reflect the light, letting but little pass through: or it may be a prism breaking the rays up into raylets arranged in lines of gorgeous rainbow colours: or it may be a lens accurately depicting a sunlit landscape, or giving a blurred image if the lens be distorted, or else concentrating the rays into a focus of fire useful or dangerous according to circumstances. It is easy to see that the human brain reacts to the universal spirit in all these ways, and further, just as the energy of the sun's rays is in no case destroyed by its temporary relation to the glass, so too man's inner rational self is in no way affected by the birth, development, or dissolution of his material body: the following lines were written to convey briefly this Buddhist idea.¹

Birth is not the intaking of life's primal breath,
 Life is not the mere prelude to what we call death,
 Death is not the dark portal or entering gate
 To a future life in a different state.
 Birth, life, and death are but raylets in line
 Brief refractions are they of a light most divine
 From the Sun which ne'er riseth and ne'er shall decline
 That above all, throughout all, within all, doth shine.

The aptness of this simile did not escape the observant mind of him who said, "Let your light so shine before men that they may . . . glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 5. 16). Now, parents cannot light this light of spirit life in their children's minds unless their own be lit, they cannot educate their offspring in TRUE religion if they themselves have it not, and parents, particularly mothers, are the most important teachers of the children, because they, chiefly, influence the child during its most impressionable first few years. Yet women generally are the most pitiable victims of superstitious tradition, the devoted slaves of the Churches, and so hopelessly blinded by priestly influence and much cherished ritual, that even when highly educated they rarely see their urgent need of emancipation from this soul-destroying ecclesiasticism; so indelible is their childhood training that they seldom realize how their whole religious system—creed, code, and ceremonial—is entirely opposed to the pure truth taught by Jesus, "God is spirit, and they who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth." And so the children of these enslaved mothers are brought up in the same bondage, the infection of false religion is transmitted from generation to generation, and millions of lives are spoiled

¹ Consult H. Fielding Hall's *The Inward Light*, for a full explanation.

by being forced to "tread the narrow way by Tophet flare to judgment day", instead of being accustomed to enjoy the perpetual peace and joy of knowing that God, and consequently the light of heaven, and eternal life, are ever present within us all if we will. The poorest and most simple-minded (Matt. 5. 3) can easily obtain this light and life-giving knowledge that "the kingdom of God is within" them (Luke 17. 21), for all that is necessary is to become as little children" (Matt. 18. 3)—which is a far harder task for the wealthy and learned—and once this knowledge is acquired, parents, quite naturally, by precept and example, pass on this priceless legacy to their children, to whom it is really much more valuable than the most costly school and university training. In this way religion ceases to be, what every healthy mind detests, an artificial strait-laced conformity with formal worship, obsolete conventions, and gross superstitions, and becomes instead the most delightful thing imaginable in our lives, a spontaneous driving force inspiring our every thought and action, stimulating that natural interest in all God's handiwork, which most normal children possess and should never lose, uniting us in sympathy with our fellow man, conquering sin, alleviating suffering and sorrow, and destroying not only fear of death, but even death itself.

This chapter is devoted to the universal aspect of TRUE religion, and having formulated its tenets and indicated the natural method of its propagation, let us in the next place try to estimate the value of such religion by surveying its universal application. —(T)—TRUE religion recognizes all little newly-born "original sinners" as coins new issued by the heavenly mint with God's own image stamped on them, but it takes some time before these infants can get into touch with this strange material world, and a still longer period must elapse before they realize their connection with the universal spirit: this latter is their second or spiritual birth, for which the parents, but especially mothers, are as responsible as for their existence. It is indeed the mother's great reward and compensation for all the burden of pregnancy, the pangs of childbirth, and the anxieties of infant rearing, that she should have the joyful privilege of influencing her little ones all through the critical period of dawning intelligence, formation of habits, and development of character, which should terminate in their being "born again"—meaning thereby awakening to knowledge of the fact that their real inner self of which they are always conscious, and to which they frequently talk, is just God, the universal spirit Father, within them: later on when the children understand things better they should learn what a wonderful birthright this really is. But unfortunately whatever Church the parents "belong to" deprives their children also of this spiritual heritage, by teaching them instead that God is some kind of awful being seated on a throne somewhere in heaven, shrouded in mystery and superstition, and waiting to judge and condemn to eternal torture all those who

refuse to worship him according to heathen rites and sacraments. Parents who have freed their minds from this superstition, and who have each for themselves realized the fundamental religious truth, that their inner rational conscious self is really the universal spirit inspiring their every thought and action, will also have realized the delightful truth that they must therefore be truly "one with" each other in this eternal spirit, and so nothing, not even death, can ever part them; further they should have no difficulty in convincing their children that they too can be similarly united for ever both with their earthly parents and the universal creator. Happy indeed must be the family whose members are all thus consciously united in the bond (religio) of this all-embracing spirit, the fruits of which are love, and joy, and life eternal. —(R)—As children grow older their fanciful beliefs in fairies are submitted to the test of their developing reason and observation, and being found unsupported by facts, are forthwith rejected, and so again becoming like these children, we submit our intuitive knowledge of God as spirit to the test of our truth-discerning reason. We have applied this test and have drawn the conclusion that all the scientific, philosophic, and religious data available, do confirm the existence of a wholly impersonal rational God possessing all the attributes of spirit: this is knowing God "in truth", and should commend itself to all intelligent parents and educational authorities, who only continue to teach current superstitious creeds and idolatrous worship of personal gods, on the principle that false religious ideas are better than none, and they know nothing better to supersede them. *Surely the best means of eradicating strife throughout the world would be the adoption in schools everywhere, of a simple, most carefully prepared and generally acceptable system of universal religion on TRUE lines, replacing all sectarian instruction of the young, which inevitably breeds discord and leads to bigotry in susceptible minds.* As a practical measure the League of Nations might well undertake the preparation of an entirely impartial religious handbook for use in the higher schools of all nations, giving a short popular account of the chief religious systems, showing how their essential doctrines all agree with each other, with the fundamental truths of philosophy, and with a rational interpretation of scientific facts, while their superfluous strife-provoking elements, their superstition and idolatrous ritual, are in no way TRUE, are contrary to the enlightened teaching of their founders, and ought to be discarded in the interests of general peace, harmony and world welfare. Beneficial beyond all words would be those educational institutions which would adopt such ideas, refusing to recognize any form of superstitious creed or formal worship, but on the other hand familiarizing the pupils with the ever-constant presence of the universal spirit which dominates all things in heaven and earth: this habitual association of the supreme power with every thing they think, and say, and do would inevitably produce truly

god-like beings whose minds and bodies and characters, developed to the full under the influence of divinely inspired reason, would proclaim that they were indeed sons of God and worthy citizens of his kingdom. Happy indeed would be the schools, colleges, and universities where teachers and pupils were united together in the ties of this really TRUE religion. —(U)—We know how young children instinctively picture in their minds all sorts of invisible and imaginary beings which to them have a very real existence, and we have to “become as little children” in this respect by cultivating a similar intuitive perception of God, not as a personal being, but as that all-pervading spirit of which we are, in fact, always conscious and should recognize as God within us. This is knowing God “in spirit”, and if “to know the only true God is life eternal”, then this natural universal religion which was known to primitive man in the stone age period, must have “saved” all the countless hosts of spirit worshippers that peopled the earth for thousands of years before the advent of “the saviour of the world”, and must have given eternal life all through the Christian era to innumerable millions of “perishing heathen” who never heard the name of Christ, but yet recognized however dimly that “God is spirit”. Moreover this, the only truly Catholic (universal) religion, likewise includes rationalists, philosophers, scientific sceptics, and all other truth-groppers, who are outcasts from the Christian Churches, because they know no other God save the one impersonal, all-pervading spirit. But although this actual knowledge of God that means eternal life is so easy and open to all, yet how few there be throughout Christendom who really know and apply this fundamental truth, for the multitudes continue to “bow themselves down in the house of Rimmon” all over the land, they pay priests to patter off prayers to imaginary personal gods just as their pagan ancestors did, or they even consult “mediums”, and practise other kinds of sorcery precisely as unenlightened savages do. When we thoroughly realize that God is spirit, and that there can be only one universal, all-pervading spirit whose immortal existence we can consciously share, here and now, then we see clearly how false are the commonly accepted notions of God, spirits, religion, etc., and all the idolatrous worship and practices associated therewith, and how entirely opposed they are to the authoritative statement, that this spirit-God, if worshipped at all, “must be worshipped in spirit and in truth.” If the eyes of the people could be opened to these facts, all this rank superstition would soon be abolished, religious strife would cease, for hostile sects, fighting Churches, and warring faiths would simply disappear, and be replaced by genuine universal religion, which would prove its spiritual nature by yielding the fruits of the spirit, love and joy, peace and perfect freedom. All restless revolutionary movements could be turned from evil into good if carefully directed towards the attainment

of such national regeneration. Happy and prosperous beyond measure would be the countries so enlightened, where there would be no invidious distinctions between low and high, poor and rich, people and their rulers, for all alike would be equally blessed, united in the "liberty, equality, and fraternity" assured by this TRUE religion. —(E)—The above-described world-wide education would make men, women, and children everywhere realize their common rational bond of union with the universal spirit and with each other, and universal religion would in this way be established throughout all the countries of the world. The natural consequence would be that the nations would find themselves dominated by the same rational spirit which has been shown to govern and control every thing in the universe, by that very "Reason which was in the beginning with God and which is God": with this divine power animating the hearts and minds of people everywhere, international differences would fade away, strife and discord would cease, and war would vanish like a hideous nightmare.

"Then the war drums throb no longer and the battle flags are furled
In the Parliament of man, the Federation of the world.
There the common-sense of most shall hold a fretful realm in awe,
And the kindly earth shall slumber lapt in universal law"

—TENNYSON, "Locksley Hall"

The entire human race would thus be welded together into one common spiritual brotherhood, and God's kingdom would indeed come, established firmly here on earth as long as the world lasts. Happy, blissfully happy, and exalted even unto paradise, must be the world when it achieves this by no means unattainable ideal. "These things have I spoken unto you that in God's word (Reason) ye may have peace."

THE RELIGION OF THE UNIVERSES

Universal religion,—True and simple, uniting parents and children in ever-joyful homes—Rational and scientific, satisfying the intellectual requirements of students and the most learned scholars—Universal and pacifying, uniting the inhabitants of the various countries of the world into harmonious communities free from ecclesiastical and social feuds—finally Exalting and ennobling the nations 'en masse' till the whole earth becomes a divinely ordered paradise—it might seem as if this TRUE religion could accomplish nothing further, and yet religion which claims to be universal must embrace the entire universe.

We have previously described how the universe contains untold millions of globes similar to those of our solar system, scattered in utmost profusion throughout the infinite profundity of space. If, as Jeans suggests¹ planets of any kind are "very rare" in this universe,

¹*The Universe Around Us*, 2nd ed., p. 340-5.

and a habitable planet like our earth "an almost incredible accident", then, of course, there is no use wasting time discussing the question he poses in these words: "our terrestrial life must in all probability have originated on the earth itself. What we would like to know, is whether it originated as the result of still another amazing accident or succession of coincidences, or whether it is the normal event for inanimate matter to produce life in due course when the physical environment is suitable. We look to the biologist for the answer which so far he has not been able to produce". But as Jeans himself computes the chances of the stars having planetary systems as being about one hundred thousand to one, that is, he allows ten in every million; and as in the same book (p. 69) he estimates that there are some 200,000, or even 400,000, million stars in the galactic system, it follows that we have astronomical support for the existence of between two and four million planetary systems in the stellar universe. Further, as the only planetary system we are acquainted with has at least one habitable globe, it would seem as if, after all, possible abodes of life may be sufficiently numerous to warrant consideration of the above-quoted question. And surely a biologist is justified in answering that the origin and evolution of life on such planets are neither "amazing accidents" nor the capricious work of a personal creator invoked by superstition, but are "normal events occurring when the physical environment is suitable" as on our earth. If the same life-producing conditions described in Part I occur on any other habitable planet they must give rise to life there, just as inevitably as an eclipse of the moon, or transit of Venus must recur when the circumstances causing them are repeated. Unless such unvarying regularity prevails all through the universe, there can be no exact science, no genuine philosophy, no true religion.

Considering now this consistent universe from the purely religious standpoint, if our own inner rational conscious self represents "the likeliest God" of all the creator's handiwork, then surely it is insulting to the divine intelligence to suppose that our puny insignificant earth should alone attain full fruition by producing creatures made in the image and likeness of the creator spirit. Can anyone believe that the supreme power continues for ever and ever idly fashioning innumerable solar systems, composed of the same materials as our own, acted on by the same forces, and experiencing similar evolutionary cycles, and that our relatively almost indiscernible speck of a world, with its comparatively limited period of habitability, should be the only populated sphere amongst such myriads, should be the only nursery for rearing celestial beings—all, all the countless other worlds being, so to speak, spiritually sterile? This is so utterly unlikely from a religious point of view that we simply must accept the alternative conclusion, and admit the existence, or at least the highly probable existence, of other worlds inhabited by creatures like ourselves.

What follows then? These other world inhabitants are either free from sin and its direful wages, in which case they have evidently discovered the secret of TRUE religion, although they are entirely ignorant of all the soul-saving creeds regarded by our earthly Churches as alone efficacious; they have no need of our imperfect religious systems, but we urgently require theirs. Or, on the other hand, these other-world people require salvation as much as our morally defective race, and since according to the Christian creed, there is but "one mediator between God and man, himself man, Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2' 5), and "there is no other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved" (Acts 4. 12), then Christ would have to repeat his tragedy of redemption in all such other worlds. The plain truth is that our idolatrous creeds, depending upon mere human agents, have entirely failed to regenerate mankind after long centuries of persistent trial, they can never be universally accepted, but are a perpetual source of fiercest strife and hatred amongst all the nations here on earth, while they are altogether inoperative in other worlds, where our mundane godlings, codes and sacraments are quite unknown.

Thus the very existence of the universe indicates the ineffectiveness of our terrestrial creeds and the imperative necessity for replacing them by universal religion, which readily removes all religious difficulties connected with our own and every other world. The light of godlike reason, that lightens every one who comes into the universe, can make rational beings everywhere, and in all worlds, realize the complete identity of their conscious spirit-born selves with the universal God-spirit, thus enabling them to "*worship God the spirit in spirit and in truth*", which is the only truly universal religion, for spirit alone transcends the limits of matter, time, and space. This is the all-important cosmic truth which is broadcast throughout all worlds: this is the message which the twinkling stars in their courses seem to be for ever heliographing to us and to each other; this is the music of the spheres, the silent requiem of the heavens which "declare the glory of God"; though "there is no speech nor language and their voice cannot be heard", yet "their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world" (Ps. 19. 1-4)—"*God is spirit*"—"God is spirit"—"*God is spirit*", know this spirit all people, nations, and languages throughout this world and all the universes, know it both "in spirit and in truth", for such knowledge of the only true God is indeed life eternal!

CHAPTER X

A GOSPEL ACCORDING TO WHAT IS *EXALTING*

The moral code of TRUE¹ religion

The truth underlying evolution

“Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven”, (Matt 6 10).

“I made known unto them thy name and will make it known that the LOVE wherewith thou lovedst me may be in them and I in them” (John 17. 26).

RELIGION as generally understood has been seen to consist of the three parts. (a) a creed or recognized conception of the divine power; (b) the form of worship to be observed in relation thereto; and (c) a moral code, usually claimed to be divinely inspired, regulating the worshipper's general conduct. As regards TRUE religion the first two of these have already been shown to find full expression in the statement “God is spirit and they that worship him must worship in spirit and in truth.” This simple yet perfect conclusion has been reached by extracting the truth common to all previous religious creeds, formulated and approved by some of the world's greatest religious teachers, and finding it to agree with rational deductions from modern scientific discoveries, thus proving it to be TRUE in every respect. It is now proposed to employ precisely the same method in regard to the third part, or moral code, in order to show how the practical application of this TRUE religion must have a powerfully exalting effect on every action of our daily lives.

Accordingly, let us consult once more that wonderful first chapter of Genesis, which seems to contain the concentrated wisdom of the most ancient philosophers in regard to the origin of all things, from which apparently Jesus derived the essential parts of his teaching, and which we have found to anticipate so accurately the conclusions of modern science. At first sight it appears strange that this narrative contains no set of rules to guide newly-created inexperienced man on his path through life, the creator merely giving him complete authority over the earth and his fellow-creatures and speeding him on his way with the injunction “be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth, and subdue it”.¹

¹ Incidentally priests, monks, and nuns, the world over, delude themselves and others with the idea that they are particularly holy and deserve special merit by vowing to disobey this divine command.

But moral laws are only necessary in social communities, and are useless to solitary individuals; further, it is quite impossible to lay down hard and fast rules suitable for every community, because, as Paul said: "All things are lawful, but all things are not expedient," and the question of expediency varies extraordinarily. Thus there is scarcely a prohibition in the decalogue which is not permitted by some community, even unprovoked murder receiving sanction among many savage tribes and amongst civilized (?) nations in time of war, while standards of morality vary greatly, even in the same community at different periods, as shown for instance, by altered customs in regard to swearing, propriety in dress, duelling, slavery, etc. Moreover, the imposition of a moral code binding on the members of any community restricts their individual freedom of action, and the endeavour to make the laws applicable to every possible question that may arise, results, eventually, in their becoming so very complicated and irksome that they are bound to be ignored or evaded. This necessitates enforcement by means of rewards and punishments, which, in the hands of enlightened secular rulers and wise administrators, and safe-guarded against abuse, can indeed achieve excellent results in establishing peaceful and prosperous communities, thus proving that these measures are beneficial, and indeed indispensable in communities containing many uneducated individuals too ignorant to act from high motives.

But these are wholly and entirely secular matters that have really nothing at all to do with TRUE religion; although sacrifices and penances, bribes and punishments, have played the most prominent part in all priest-ordained moral codes attached to the worship of personal gods from time immemorial to the present day, yet these invariably produce far worse evils than those they pretend to remedy or prevent. They never succeeded even under the divine inspiration invoked by the Bible, for adherence to the elaborate code ascribed to Jehovah was scathingly condemned by Jesus as causing the degradation of the priest-ridden Jews. Jesus lived, and preached, and died opposing these ecclesiastical sacrificial systems, but his disciples, aided by the born Pharisee Paul, replaced his teaching by another model of the Jewish system that persists to this day, in which, by the irony of fate, Christ himself is represented as the sacrificial victim, on acceptance or rejection of which depends the assignment of the Christian's rewards and punishments: Jesus lived, and preached, and died endeavouring to substitute for all such God-bargaining creeds, a truly exalting ideal which he evidently borrowed from the old Hebrew version of the creation legends. Here the creator is represented as anticipating that man, having multiplied as directed, would live together in social communities, where some guide to conduct would be necessary, and so this is supplied, not as a hard and fast set of rules, but in the far more elevating form of an implied directing principle, which

surely only needs to be understood in order to commend itself to all, as it did to Jesus. It is definitely stated that "God made man in his own image and likeness," in other words he allowed him to share his own rational creative spiritual nature, *and must therefore have expected him to act as he himself does, or, as Jesus expressed it, requires him to "do the will of the Father in heaven"*.

If man realizes from early childhood that he is indeed united to God by having identically the same spiritual powers, then he will "do always the things that are pleasing to him" (John 8. 29), he will think, speak, work, and judge as God thinks, speaks, works, and judges and this chapter (Gen. 1) leaves no room for doubt as to what that means, for it gives us, as it were, a complete diary of God's working method during every day of one entire week, thus illustrating perfectly man's true guide to conduct.

Take the first day's entry for example: "And God said, 'Let there be light' and there was light. And God saw the light that it was good". How childishly simple and yet how profoundly TRUE! (t) When the universal spirit utters the creative word "Let there be", it most assuredly is true, "God's word is truth" (John 17. 17); (r) this word of truth, being the product of divine reason—which "was in the beginning with God, and which is God"—and actuated by creative power, must necessarily be accomplished, and so "there was light"; (u) there is no variation throughout the whole God-ordained order of creation, this same process is universally employed, whatever the work, day after day, so there can be no mistake concerning it; always, always, divine reason determines the truth, that finds expression in the creative word "Let it be", and this is invariably followed by the sequel "it was so"; (e) and the final result in each case receives an exalting expression of divine approval—it is pronounced to be good.

Not perfect, however: the light was dim and hazy, the newly-formed heavenly bodies frequently collided, there were terrestrial earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, violent hurricanes, extensive floods, and devastating fires, which have all left their records behind them in the earth's structure; moreover the impulse to "be fruitful and multiply" entailed a struggle for existence, and nature, then as now, was "red in tooth and claw"—yet "God saw that it was good." This struggling, heaving, groaning preliminary creation can only have been good because the universal divine rational creative spirit was inherent in this raw material, working very slowly, accumulating facts, trying experiments, making mistakes, improving by experience, *working exactly as our own inner rational creative spirit works*, not performing miracles as a confident omniscient personal god would certainly do, but feeling its way naturally, aiming always at a higher ideal, at ultimate perfection. All this is confirmed by the teaching of science, for God's oft-repeated injunction, "Let there be," agrees fully with the constant unvarying process of universal evolution

previously described, in which each successive stage follows inevitably and imperceptibly on the preceding with an orderly sequence implying rational design, and with a tendency to continuous improvement indicating final perfection. Let primary radiation be and its mere emission of energy results in darkness becoming light; let the revolving nebulæ be and the starry worlds, including our sun, earth, moon, and other planets appear: let be, and the earth cools down and the seas and dry land are separated; let be, and intensive solar energy, acting on nascent elements, kindles the spark of life that develops into all the varied forms of plants and animals; let be, and the struggle for existence produces the survival of the fittest; let be, and man rises above the brute creation, subduing and governing the natural world around him by virtue of God's own spirit active within him—the spirit which shows its divine origin and nature by its creative power dominated by reason. *And man must employ this spirit in God's own way, that is he must, as stated above, think, speak, act, and judge as God does, or in the pithy words of Jesus he must "do God's will"—otherwise he is "not of God" and lives a mere animal existence: this is the sole religious law which binds him ("religo"—to bind) in all his relations with the universal spirit and with his fellow-creatures, who are endowed with the same spirit.* In order to understand fully this crowning principle and climax of all previous considerations, let us elaborate it in detail along the simple, practical, yet highly exalting lines of TRUE religion.

TRUE

Doing God's will implies in the first place an intimate knowledge of God's nature, enabling us to think as he thinks. This we have acquired by finding that, generally speaking, man everywhere, from his very beginning, seems to have intuitively regarded God as spirit, essentially creative, impersonal, indivisible, universal spirit: moreover, we have learned to recognize this spirit by realizing that the true inner self, of which we are all conscious every moment of our waking lives, directing our every thought and action, is actually nothing else but this same universal creator and controller of all, working within us. By grasping this fact, which, though profoundly TRUE, is yet easily understood by the most child-like minds, we, then, as a natural consequence, become "one with" this eternal spirit, and, adjusting our thoughts accordingly, are able to think as God thinks. Can anything be more true, can anything be more exalting?

RATIONAL

Again doing God's will implies knowledge of that will represented by the divine Word or rational truth, and we can only gain this effectively and intelligently by collecting all the relevant

facts available and submitting them to our truth-discerning reason, which if the material be sufficient and reliable always enables us to perceive and perform the required word of truth. This we have tried to do in regard to the question of God's will, and have found that scientific truth not only confirms the existence of the universal creative spirit as primary radiation, but shows that the supreme power, which gives rise to all the energy and matter in the universe, has impressed its will on these, making them subject to the one, all comprehensive, naturally progressive, and pre-eminently rational principle of universal evolution, *the trend of which is towards ultimate perfection*. By demonstrating the truth of universal evolution science proves amongst innumerable other things that the creation narrative in Genesis 1. is in the main correct, and that the interpretation of it given by Jesus is wholly true, more particularly his statements that the creator God is spirit to be known in spirit and in truth (John 4. 24), and that man being born of this universal spirit (Gen. 1. 27) is also spirit (John 3. 6), endowed with the same creative attributes, dominated by reason, working in the same evolutionary manner, sharing the same divine power of productive thought, and thus capable of perceiving God's will and purpose in all things. Can anything be more rational and more exalting than the assurance of Jesus, —which underlies all TRUE religion, and is confirmed by deductions from the fundamental facts of science and evolutionary philosophy—that by knowing and doing this divine will we can, here, now and always, share consciously that spiritual existence, that glory which existed before the world was (John 17. 5 and 22.) and shall endure for ever?

UNIVERSAL

In the next place the doing of God's will must be effected in its own universal way: just as the universal spirit is represented as expressing its will by one unvarying rational method of universal evolution, which being TRUE was applicable throughout all the different stages and periods of the creative work, so too man, being endowed with the same spirit, must imitate this universal process closely on all occasions, at all times, and in all places. To the ordinary believers in the orthodox creeds it may seem intolerable thus to introduce religion into every detail of life, because for these people religion consists in church services, sermons, sacraments, scripture reading, prayer, etc., and it is obvious that these must be relegated to convenient times, so as not to interfere with practical every-day pursuits; the pious individual who tries to upset this agreeable arrangement is quite rightly regarded as a nuisance and a bore. Such devotional exercises merely accentuate the fact that these worshippers are so widely separated from the deity that special efforts are necessary in

order to effect, as it were, a temporary artificial connexion between them. If the ordinary Christian were candid he would acknowledge that he spends about 165 hours out of the weekly 168 in doing his own will, serving his own interests, pleasures, and inclinations, conforming no doubt to customary laws and regulations, but without any conscious relation to God's will. Perhaps for two hours on Sunday and for ten minutes a day during the rest of the week he carries out the will of his Church, which teaches him to worship a personal god or deity complex, according to some particular brand of heathen ritual, to obey a series of negative moral laws, "Thou shalt not do" this, that, and the other, to subscribe liberally to Church funds, and to bring up his family in unquestioning adherence to the same stagnant routine—while in return he receives the Church's blessing and futile passport to an imaginary heaven. The whole of this simply indicates deplorable ignorance of the nature and will of the only true God, since all the most reliable religious teaching, the facts of modern science, and the wisest philosophical conclusions alike confirm the statement of Jesus, that God is spirit, consequently neither requiring idolatrous homage, nor in any way concerned with moral codes that are obviously only made and enforced by man for his own worldly benefit. With this practice of the ordinary religious régime contrast that adopted by the adherent of TRUE religion, who knows his inner self, his real life, to be actually "one with" the universal spirit: he does not insult this spirit with the sensual worship accorded to pagan idols and personal gods—decorative temples to please their eyes *and his*, prayers and melodious praise to gratify their ears *and his own*, incense as a pleasant substitute for the savoury smell of obsolete burnt offerings, and bowings and genuflexions in token of submission—but he "worships in spirit" by realizing his complete union with the supreme power; in this way the will of "the true worshipper" (John 4. 23) becomes merged in the divine will, and he gladly and quite naturally acts in all things as the God within him directs.

Yet few there be who honestly feel inclined to do God's will universally in this way, for as Paul says, "the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God" (1 Cor. 3. 14); but this is because Paul's "natural man" is rational man instinctively revolting against grossly false and repulsive ecclesiastical conceptions of God and religion, whereas the real natural man is the ordinary child, who receives spiritual things so greedily that he lives in a spirit world of his own, who "always beholds the face of his Father in heaven", and who consequently is the happiest mortal under the sun. *This delightful state would persist all through adult life if children were only brought up in the knowledge that TRUE religion has nothing to do with ecclesiastical creeds and church ritual, but is simply perpetual conscious spiritual union with the source of all light and joy and life eternal.* Such spiritual relation-

ship is neither an occult mystery nor a delusion, but a reliable well supported fact (p. 239), though strange to say the joy of it is "hidden from the wise and understanding" who give a grudging assent to its abstract truth. Stranger still, though it is a religious truth, dimly recognized even by primitive man who composed the earliest creation legends, yet priestcraft has always perverted it, and by magnifying the evil of sin and fostering fears of supernatural personal gods, has turned religion into a lifelong nightmare for superstitious minds, and made it a profitable source of power and wealth for the priesthood, and of perpetual strife for both laity and clergy. It may be that Church-taught Christians really cannot "receive the things of the spirit of God" because, as Jesus told the Jewish temple worshippers, priestly ritual so paralyses the spiritual senses that they can neither hear nor understand his spiritual message. It may be that Christians cannot be "born again", cannot be "born of the spirit", but must continue to believe in all the ecclesiastical errors, previously detailed (pp. 102-3, 166), drilled into their minds in childhood; if this be so, then let not such Christians cast the same stumbling blocks in front of the "little ones" (Matt. 18. 6), nor allow their Churches to deprive the children of their spiritual birthright by forcing them to accept all this false depressing superstition, instead of teaching them TRUE religion, which is most intelligible to the child mind because it turns life into a divine fairy tale.

Further, just as TRUE religion, far from being an intrusive kill-joy, is in reality the very essence of perfect happiness, so also far from being incompatible with business pursuits, it actually offers the surest method of achieving genuine success in any and every sphere of life, *for if we are to succeed in anything it must be done in God's own way, which, as we have seen by his method of creation, is always a true, rational, universal and exalting way.* This is so extremely important from the practical point of view that we must point out how universally applicable it is to all human affairs, and give a couple of outstanding examples illustrating its utility. Consider then the application of God's method to agriculture, how necessary it is for the farmer (t) to obtain true seed for his intended crop, (r) to reason out all the conditions suitable for its growth, (u) to be its universal provider giving it everything it needs day by day (e) until eventually he can feel exalted as he reaps the fruit of his labour and like God pronounces it "good". And the same is true not merely of all man's daily occupations, commercial and industrial operations, housekeeping, education, etc., but it is likewise true of all his mental processes, his abstract thoughts, his words, his deeds, his whole individual life, as well as his social, national, and international affairs.

BE TRUE

Think truly and thy thoughts
 Shall the world's famine feed ;
Speak truly, and each word of thine
 Shall be a fruitful seed ;
Live truly, and thy life shall be
 A great and noble creed.

—HORATIUS BONAR.

It is pre-eminently true of his religion which man can only make a success by God's own method, that is to say ; (t) he must know the only true God, the universal spirit in spirit and in truth, and have no personal god of any kind ; (r) he must employ his divine reason in order to realize the complete identity of his own spirit with this eternal spirit ; (u) only thus can he grasp the wonderfully practical influence of such spiritual religion in his own individual life, and its possibilities if adopted in family life, in social life, in the lives of all in this world and throughout the entire universe ; (e) and realizing all this he will see how supremely exalting is this knowledge of the only true God whom to be "one with" is life eternal. *In actual practice TRUE religion means only that rational beings should let their reason guide them to do what is TRUE in all things, and the universal spirit of reason, which created all "in the beginning" and whose "word is truth", cannot expect either less or more from beings born of the same spirit.* This right use of reason is in no way irksome or exacting, but readily becomes habitual, and testing it by its fruits proves its god-like efficacy in reducing the chaos of human affairs to order. Thus "scientific sceptics" deliberately and consistently follow the divine plan in their work, by first gathering all the known truth relative to their purpose, making rational deductions therefrom, testing their universal truth by varying conditions of experiment or application, and submitting the confirmed conclusion for final judgment and for complete acceptance if found "good" : there is no need to emphasize here that science owes its amazing success and wonderful achievements entirely to adopting this method used by the rational creative spirit in the evolution of the universe. On the other hand the innumerable woes that have fallen on mankind from time immemorial are largely caused by man's failure to carry out God's will universally in the way indicated above, as is well illustrated by the terrible evils perpetrated by sacerdotalism in its ruthless efforts to suppress reason, and establish compulsory faith in the grossest superstition—formerly by diabolical persecution, nowadays by perverse education of helpless children. Can there be any doubt that these evils would be completely removed and an improvement, hitherto undreamt of by the world, would inevitably follow in every department

of life, individual, social, political and religious, if human beings everywhere were trained to apply habitually their divine reason to all things along TRUE lines, thereby knowing and doing God's will universally?

EXALTING

Finally the doing of God's will must be inspired by the divine purpose and this is the most exalting part of the exalting aspect of TRUE religion. There can be no mistake in regard to what this purpose is, since the whole week's record of God's handiwork is punctuated with the oft-repeated expression: "God saw that it was good," so that no matter what the work might be God's object was to make it good: as described, he planned out his scheme truthfully, executed it rationally, checked each step to ensure universal conformity, and was gratified with his exalting achievement. He is indeed represented as commending even what was only partly good; for example the fire-mist light that was approved at first was scarcely distinguishable from darkness, yet the divine reason is satisfied with it, anticipating its progressive development into suns which would animate the dead elements with procreative life, and produce forms worthy of being imbued with the universal rational spirit itself—and when this ulterior purpose was in due course achieved, "behold it was very good", approaching desired perfection. This is fully confirmed by the teaching of science which offers overwhelming evidence proving that universal evolution is the ever-working process by which the creative spirit attains its end, and the whole essence of evolution is continuous progress towards higher and higher stages, foreshadowing the utmost perfection attainable. Clearly then the profoundly wise creation legend, the facts of science, evolutionary philosophy, and all true religion, alike agree in the reasonable common sense conclusion, that *the supreme power must be working along definite lines for the progressive betterment of creation, with a view to possible perfection*, and obviously since man is formed in the likeness of this rational creative spirit with a truth-discerning mind working in the same evolutionary manner, he should instinctively co-operate in this divine purpose, and make the perfect ideal the aim of all his activities.

Such then is the divine purpose, and it inevitably suggests that it is prompted by godlike benevolence, by "good will towards men", by love divine. Once more and for the last time, we note how the penetrating mind of Jesus seized on the hidden meaning of the creation legend, by emphasizing all through his teaching that its underlying motive was divine love having as its object perfection. According to him, "God so loved the world", and its rational creatures, that he sent his message of truth into the minds of everyone, making even children and primitive savages

conscious of his spirit within them, teaching us all, and enabling us all, to imitate him in his own TRUE way, and even to reciprocate the love which caused him to create and endow us with his divine rational creative spirit: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart . . . and thy neighbour as thyself" (Matt. 22. 37-40), by such love "*ye therefore shall be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect*" (Matt. 5. 43-48). And this again is fully confirmed by general considerations: common sense philosophy suggests that the impersonal creative spirit is naturally imbued with all the higher qualities of the mind necessary for this creative function (p. 221); the power which evolved all things, including the reasoning human mind, and the loving human heart, must surely be itself endowed with the attributes of reason and love, and must reveal these in its handiwork—and since man, being born of this spirit, inherits this power, he too should give evidence of his origin by constant exercise of his love-inspired reason. The golden rule of evolution, so far as concerns human conduct, is perhaps best expressed in the concise words of the poet,¹ that "all men's good be each man's rule", which surely means loving our fellowmen even better than ourselves; why then should there be any insensate opposition to accepting such an exalting principle as evolution? Science agrees that evolution rings TRUE by all the various tests applied to it. Is it not good in itself, since it tends to produce good out of evil, thus proving that it is actuated by good will, otherwise, love? And has it not been shown to be in operation from "the beginning", yea even "from everlasting to everlasting"? But that which is universally true, inherently good, and co-existent with matter during all time must necessarily be divine in its very essence, and whoever or whatever opposes it must sooner or later come to nought, while on the other hand, as we have seen, imitation of the evolutionary method offers man the surest means of success even in his mere earthly pursuits.

"A Power which builds, unbuilds, and builds again
 Ruling all things according to the rule
 Of virtue, which is beauty, truth, and use:
 So that all things do well which serve the Power,
 And ill which hinder."²

As it seems then unquestionably TRUE that evolution is the Rational method adopted by the Universal creative power for achieving its Exalting purpose of reaching the utmost perfection attainable, it is obvious that man's most elevating course is to assist this lofty ideal by making "all men's good" the rule and object of his life—"greater love hath no man than this." By the

¹ Tennyson, *The Golden Year*.

² Completion of quotation from *The Light of Asia*, cited on p. 52.

practical application of this love-inspired evolutionary principle to all his affairs, man secures his own individual happiness and prosperity, promotes the welfare of his fellow-men, and above all, since he thereby completely identifies himself with the divine purpose and motive, he in this way becomes "one with" the eternal creative spirit, sharing its glory and immortality. This is the supremely exalting method of doing God's will, whereby we gain entrance into the Kingdom of heaven (Matt. 7. 21).

GENERAL SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Here then is the answer to our original all-important question, "What is truth"? (John 18. 38). The correct reply, "God's word (Logos) is truth" (John 17. 17), had already been given, but the leaders of religion, the anointed priests led by the high-priest in council, had rejected this, and persecuted the truth-revealer even unto death: their predecessors had stoned the prophets, while their successors and close imitators treated "scientific sceptics", philosophers, and all other truth-revealing "heretics", after similar cruel fashion, because they refused to put faith in orthodox superstition, and because their reply to this question was, "Our Reason (logos) reveals to us the truth." These two answers to the question are in fact identically the same, for the divine Reason and the creative Word of truth it utters, are both represented by the expression "Logos": this "Reason was in the beginning with God", this "Reason was God" (John 1. 1), this Reason is "the true light which lighteth every man coming into the world" (John 1. 9), and this Reason, rightly used, "dwells in us full of grace and truth" (see footnote, p. 233). Man's utter failure to grasp this most simple fact is the cause of all the abominable strife and bloodshed, the atrocious tortures and persecutions, repression of truth, and innumerable other evils instigated by the false superstitions faiths that have prevailed since the world was first populated, and which still maintain it in a deplorable welter of contentious errors. When we realize this plain truth and appeal for guidance to the divine principle within us, to our mature Reason, preserved or liberated from superstitious training, it at once provides us with that TRUE religion we are seeking, complete as regards the three essential parts, all in purest spiritual form, suitable for universal acceptance. (a) It reveals to us the only true God as the universal spirit, entirely impersonal, creative, dominated by reason, eternal in the heavens:—this "truth makes us free" (John 8. 32) from faith in false incomprehensible personal gods of all kinds. (b) It reveals that our rational relationship with this Supreme Power must consist in our real inner reasoning self—of which we are ever aware—being nothing else but this universal spirit within us, thus establishing our most intimate, permanent, conscious, spiritual union with God: this simple

yet sublime truth exposes, and "makes us free" from, the contemptible futility of idolatrous temple worship, sacraments, ceremonies, and of the whole ecclesiastical system for producing a false evanescent "devotional spirit", which is fostered by priestcraft in pretence of religion, but largely for its own worldly interests. (c) And Reason reveals too that all man's petty ideas of good and evil, of right and wrong, are only of consequence in his fleeting material life, that his sole religious obligation consists in doing what his divine Reason, rightly used along TRUE lines, tells him is God's will, and that the only spiritual "sin" he can commit is perverting divine Reason in himself or others, so as to obliterate the essential child's state of being "one with" the universal spirit:—this common sense truth "makes us free" from "past regrets and future fears" concerning sin and its atonement, concerning death and the hereafter.

(T) All these conclusions have been carefully weighed in the balance and proved to be TRUE by our fourfold test:—(R) they have been tested and found to agree with rational deductions from reliable scientific data: (U) they are universal because they contain the purified truth extracted from all past and present superstitious faiths, and offer it in TRUE form universally applicable throughout this and all other worlds, and (E) they represent the most exalted message delivered in simple, irresistibly convincing, words, by the highest authority—recognized nominally at least by all Christendom—who definitely certifies them as TRUE (John 8. 45-47, also p. 181). Finally they withstand the crucial test, "by their fruits ye shall know them," for, being purely spiritual, they of necessity bring forth the fruits of the spirit, love, joy, peace, and perfect freedom. Were it not for the world's "blind guides", the light of TRUE religion would so shine before men that they would see its divine Truth, would realize its sweet Reasonableness, would adopt it Universally, and so Exalt the whole earth into a veritable paradise, inhabited by those proved worthy to be sons of God, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven.

This would be the immediate result achieved by the practical application of TRUE religion—our world reclaimed from degrading superstition, and then the establishment of the spiritual brotherhood of man on the earth—but what would be the final end? In discussing the scientific aspect of creation we have seen that science is halting between two opinions as regards the world's course and ultimate destiny. On the one hand is the mathematician's conjecture that it is all a meaningless formula without rational purpose or end, "a message of melancholy grandeur and oppressive vastness" (Sir James Jeans, *The Universe Around Us*—concluding paragraphs), energy exhausting itself in a "heat death", the universe progressing inevitably to its permanent grave, to final extinction, to utter annihilation, with only the cold comfort that our remote descendants have a wide margin

of time to accustom themselves to a world in which the air would be frozen liquid and the oceans frozen solid. On the other hand, apparently endless regeneration of ever-improving universes, until perhaps eventually a perfect world, perfectly adjusted might be evolved, supporting ideal creatures in an ideal environment, both alike worthy and capable of eternal stabilization.

TRUE religion being purely spiritual, is profoundly indifferent to all such speculations and forecasts regarding the material universe; it is only concerned with the supremely important fact that man's true inner rational self, which animates and governs his fleshly body, is, or can be, "one with" the divine universal spirit, sharing all its attributes and activities, sharing its indifference to physical conditions, sharing its "glory" which existed "before the world was" (John 17. 5). Nothing else signifies, nothing else is of any consequence. Good and evil may neutralize each other: "life and death are one" though our material bodies perish as such; the sun, the moon, the earth, the stars must run their course; fresh universes may come, endure for countless æons, and in their turn disappear; matter and energy may be transformed into the ether, and retransformed indefinitely, or time and space may seem to vanish altogether, but truth-revealing, love-inspired Reason, which "was in the beginning with God and which is God", endures for ever and ever, and we are—or can be—an imperishable part thereof. "God's word (logos) is truth": God is truth-revealing Reason (logos):—Divine Reason is love-inspired: Therefore "God is love", rational love—and so,

"We smile to know God's (Love's) greatness
Flows around our incompleteness,
Round our restlessness this rest."

—Author unknown.

PART IV

EXALTING

The Living Sun

“ A sun but dimly seen
Here, till the mortal morning mists of earth
Fade in the noon of heaven, when creed and race
Shall bear false witness, each of each, no more,
But find their limits by that larger light,
And overstep them, moving easily
Thro’ after-ages in the love of Truth,
The truth of Love.

The Sun, the Sun ! they rail
At me the Zoroastrian. *Let the Sun,*
Who heats our earth to yield us grain and fruit,
And laughs upon thy field as well as mine,
And warms the blood of Shah¹ and Sunnee¹
Symbol the Eternal!

—TENNYSON, “ Akbar’s Dream ”.

¹ Two opposing Mohammedan sects.

CHAPTER XI

TRUE REVELATION

DIVINE revelation, meaning thereby miraculous communication of knowledge through some supernatural channel, angels, so-called "spirits", etc., is mere superstition or sorcery, and finds no place in TRUE religion, or science.¹ It is false to maintain that all or any of the myths, miracles, and legends with which both Old and New Testaments abound must be accepted as true and vouched for by God himself simply because these scriptures are proclaimed by ecclesiastical authority (p. 105, *et seq.*) to be divinely inspired: rather is it true that writings which contain either fabulous tales intended for acceptance as facts, or accounts of miraculous events proved false by trustworthy historical records (p. 70), are thereby plainly shown to be erring human documents, on which but little reliance can be placed. In particular the biblical book which is specially called, and announced in its opening words to be, "the Revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave him to shew . . . by his angel unto his servant John", has no true right or title to be regarded as a divine revelation, as can easily be proved by the fourfold test: (T) it bears no resemblance at all to God's word of truth concerning man's spiritual union with God the spirit (John 4. 24) which was the TRUE "revelation of Jesus" preached by himself (John 17) during his lifetime; (R) on the contrary its terrible personal god seated on a great white throne, its very material heaven, and its most Jewish new Jerusalem, its fabulous monsters, its fantastic imagery mingled with heathen sacrificial ritual, and its unfulfilled prophecies about "things which must shortly come to pass" (Chap. 1. 1), "for the time is at hand" (Chap. 1. 3), particularly the oft-repeated false promise and closing assurance, "I come quickly", "Yea! I come quickly" (Chap. 3. 11; 22. 7, 12, and 20), all prove it to be wholly irrational: (U) so far from being universally accepted, few, if any, minds unprejudiced by early training, would believe such a fairy tale, and surely none can really hope that it represents divinely inspired truth, for (E) the only exalting triumph of good, worthy of divine omnipotence, must consist, not in the

¹ Several New Testament examples, where such revelations are contradicted by the recorded facts, have been given, notably the visit of the angel Gabriel to Mary (p. 133), the heavenly message at Christ's baptism (footnote, p. 232), and Paul's vision at Damascus (p. 185, see also p. 97).

eternal torture of the condemned, but in the transformation of evil into good. This so-called "Revelation of S. John the divine" is then not TRUE and is in fact directly repudiated by Jesus himself; credulous people who foolishly allow themselves to be beguiled by its promises of rewards (Rev. 1. 3, and 22. 7), or scared by its description of an imaginary last judgment (Chap. 20. 11-15), and by its empty threats (Chap. 22. 18 and 19), should note that Jesus refutes all this gross superstition, denouncing as "workers of iniquity" those who pretend to "prophesy by his name" (Matt. 7, 22, 23; Rev. 1. 3, 22. 7). This at once disposes of all the biblical claims to similar prophetic revelation, such as Isaiah 24 *et seq.*, the visions of Daniel in his Chapter 7 and onwards, the false prophecies of an immediate second advent attributed to Christ, and their elaboration by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15, and 1 Thessalonians 4, all which show how, for a long time before and after the beginning of the Christian era, the Jewish world was permeated by this pernicious form of superstition that corrupted the early Church and has survived to the present day.

On the other hand we have seen that Buddha, Jesus Christ, and Mohammed, though all credited by their followers with supernatural powers and favour, in reality reached their conclusions simply by prolonged solitary reasoning, and although each of these teachers claimed to have a monopoly of inspiration, yet this was only the natural result produced by sudden perception of the long-sought truth, giving the impression of exclusive beatific visions or revelations. It seems quite reasonable, therefore, that similar natural revelations of truth should still occur from time to time, and such experiences—if they deal with important matters not otherwise discernible, if they are the result of prolonged cogitation by reliable, well instructed and unbiased minds, if they are quite natural in circumstances and in substance, and if they ring TRUE by the fourfold test—are surely worthy of record, with a view to universal acceptance. The following vision, which appeared to the writer when convalescing from paratyphoid fever in a foreign hospital during the war, seems to be of this nature, and is therefore related here and discussed later in order to determine its value as an expression of what is TRUE concerning the hereafter.

* * *

On a glorious sunny spring morning I found myself roaming through a lovely valley alongside a clear rippling stream, of which, I drank copious draughts and felt greatly refreshed thereby. Passing a little further on I encountered three children wading while their mothers were carelessly knocking down the edge of the bank into the stream, so that the water became quite muddy, and the children drank it thus; I remonstrated with the mothers, but they only asked curtly: "What business is it of yours?" and so I proceeded on my way. Leaving the stream I struck off

to the right, and wandered on for hours along pretty little paths that tracked their way through most beautiful glades, carpeted with every variety of spring flowers; snowdrops even were there, although the May blossom was out in the wildest profusion, scenting the air with its perfume; crocuses of different colours, primroses, violets, daffodils, and bluebells, were everywhere, whilst the whole valley seemed alive with the buzz of bees and insects of all kinds, flitting about amongst the flowers; butterflies fluttered hither and thither, little birds in great numbers were singing in the trees, some larks were trilling delightfully high up in the air, and altogether the place was a perfect paradise. The only thing that interfered with my complete happiness was the fact that light fleecy clouds drifted at intervals across the sky obscuring the sun for a minute or two, suggesting that possibly the morning might cloud over, and become cold and perhaps wet—but fortunately this did not happen.

I met very few people because I kept to the more secluded paths, but I saw several men at different times, going along quite oblivious of their delightful surroundings, and I found that they were picking up little lumps out of the paths, rubbing the mud off them until they shone like silver, and then putting them into their pockets or shoulder bags; one man whom I passed was so heavily laden that he could scarcely move, and yet he kept on adding to his burden in spite of my protest against such folly. Also at one place the track wound round a little subsidiary horse-shoe-shaped valley, and at the first limb of the horseshoe I saw a tree covered with luscious-looking fruit resembling tomatoes in appearance, and I knew that it was very unwholesome if not poisonous, yet there were signs that a lot of it had been eaten: when I got round to the opposite limb of the horseshoe on a little higher level, I heard sounds of wild merriment, and looking down across the valley, I saw a group of three or four couples devouring the fruit and becoming very hilarious; I shouted a warning, but they only jeeringly invited me to join them, and so I was glad to pass round the end of the horseshoe, out of reach of the incongruous sounds.

Towards the afternoon I came out on a fairly wide road which traversed the main valley, and turned to the left down this, knowing that it would lead to the bed of the stream of which I had drunk in the morning. As I passed along the road I noticed a great difference in the landscape on the two sides: On my left looking downwards was the paradise I had passed through on my way up, on my right-hand extending uphill was only a rather dense forest with apparently not a single pathway through it, at least none on that part of the road. Presently I could see as I expected the bed of the stream passing down to the centre of the valley, and just before reaching this I saw that here there was a path running up through the wood on my right, and as the forest was

more open at this point, one could trace the track leading up rather steeply for three or four hundred yards, and then becoming lost to view amongst the closely set trees; also leading on to the track from the road were two planks bridging a little ditch, about a foot wide at the side of the road. Gathered round the plank bridge as I came up was a forlorn group of four persons looking very distrustfully at the path, on which I now saw were the three children who drank of the muddied stream in the morning, toiling up in single file, looking straight in front of them—and soon they passed out of sight into the wood: as they did so a man of the group emptied his pockets of silver, dropped his shoulder bag into the ditch, and with a set face strode across the bridge and up the path. By this time I had reached the bridge and sat down on a stone to rest, when the two men and one woman who remained asked me, all together, if I too were going up the path; I answered: "Yes! after a rest," adding, "it seems to be a very nice way but quite different to those on the other side of the road"; they exchanged glances at my remark, and one of the men furtively tapped his forehead as a sign to the others that he thought I must be foolish; after doing so he also very abruptly crossed the planks and started up the path. The couple who were left were, I judged, part of the group of revellers under the fruit tree, as they both looked haggard and ill, and she was still decked out with garlands and half withered flowers round her neck. I said to them: "Why do you go up this path if you dislike it so?" whereupon to my surprise the woman burst into tears, and wailing out, "Oh! I can't bear to go along it," she tore the garlands from her neck, threw them petulantly on the ground, and then quickly passed over the bridge. Her friend looked sadly for a minute or two at the flowers on the ground, then glanced fearfully up and down the road as if seeking some means of escape, and finally he too very slowly and reluctantly followed his companion. "What extraordinary conduct!" I thought, and just then I saw a flight of about a dozen white butterflies heading straight for the road, but no sooner had they reached this than they stopped as if opposed by some invisible barrier; four or five of them wheeled straight up in the air and were lost to sight, the remainder turned back down the valley again, except one which had outdistanced the others and dropped at my feet quivering; after a few feeble flutterings of its wings it lay still, and when I picked it up it was quite dead—all this seemed to me very strange, and yet I had not the least idea that there was more in it than met the eye.

I was disappointed and surprised to find that the bed of the stream was here perfectly dry, as there seemed to be good collecting surface in the valley above this point: I looked downstream to see if there were any signs of water and thought I detected a trickle a long way below me, and at the same time observed a young lady with golden hair coming up the path by the bed of

the stream, swinging her hat by the ribbon in her hand, taking the keenest interest in her surroundings, and evidently thoroughly appreciating the lovely day. The moment I saw her coming I felt urged to move onwards, so I rose, stretched myself, passed leisurely over the planks, and wended my way up the path. When I had gone about two hundred paces it occurred to me to look round and see how the lady was faring, and whether she too would show any signs of hesitation at crossing the bridge: I found that she had just reached the wide road, which she then crossed without stopping, merely looking up it casually to see what it was like, and when she came to the ditch, she disdained the planks and jumped lightly across on to the path. I resolved to wait till she came up, and tell her about the curious behaviour of the people at the bridge, but an irresistible impulse compelled me to resume my way, and as I turned round to do so a peculiar thing happened. It seemed to me that someone said quite clearly: "Miss X has passed along this road before,"¹ but of course there was nobody near, the lady following me being beyond earshot, and the other people having long since disappeared out of sight; I had not been thinking of Miss X, nor did the lady behind resemble her in any way, so that this information appeared at the time utterly trivial and meaningless, consequently it quickly passed out of my mind without conveying to me anything of its true significance.

The path was a single track leading apparently straight up to the top without any by-paths on either side; moreover, it was shut in on the left by a moss-grown wall about three feet high—made of stones, the interstices being filled with ferns of various kinds, particularly beautiful tufts of maiden hair, while on the top were numbers of those ferns with kidney-shaped transparent fronds through which the rays of the sinking sun shone, making them look like amber glass. On the right-hand side of the track was a gutter about three or four feet wide, filled with dry thorny twigs; I had noticed a similar thing occasionally alongside the paths in the lower glades, and was amazed to see signs in both places that this had been trodden on, as if some people had actually preferred to walk on the thorny, rather than on the well-beaten track. From the moment that I was urged to cross the bridge onwards I was aware of a strange under-current of constraint, which I had not felt when wandering at will through the lower part of the valley, but apart from this the walk through the forest was most delightful; the light fleecy clouds previously referred to had completely dispersed, the air was redolent with the scent of wild roses and honeysuckle which grew luxuriantly all round, and the contrasting effects of light and shadow caused by the setting sun shining through the trees of the forest were very

¹ The lady referred to here was a friend of my student days, who died about ten years before this occurrence.

pleasant. One thing only seemed lacking—not a bird was to be heard, not an insect to be seen, nor a single sign of animal life to be detected, so that the wood appeared strangely silent after nature's concert in the lower paradise: in spite of this the walk through the wood was quite as enjoyable as the morning's experience, though in a more subdued way, and I continued to wonder more and more at the extraordinary reluctance to undertake it, displayed by the people at the plank bridge.

On finally emerging from the wood I found I was about one hundred yards from the top of the valley, over the crest of which the setting sun was shedding a dazzling flood of light. The moss-covered stone wall gradually sloped away to the ground, and I felt compelled to leave the track and recline on a soft bank in a lovely grotto-work recess about fifteen yards to the left of the track; the sun's rays fell on me sideways, and I had a full view of the exit of the path from the wood a little lower down. A minute or two after I had taken up this position the lady who had followed me emerged from the wood with a pleased expression on her face, as if she too had thoroughly enjoyed the walk up: she looked carelessly round her, but almost immediately fixed her gaze on the brilliant sunset, and slowly her features assumed a look of extraordinary intense yearning, combined however with the most perfect happiness as if she knew that her craving was about to be satisfied. She came quickly forward with her hands stretched out in front of her and her lips widely parted as if she were drinking in the sun's rays: her face appeared to be itself glowing with light, so I was not surprised to note as she got abreast or slightly past me, that her back was as brightly lit up as her face, and that she cast no shadow on the path; when she passed she of course came between me and the sunlight, with which she became completely merged and incorporated. And now a most extraordinary thing happened to me; I suddenly became aware that this sunlight was no ordinary sunshine, but that it was *alive*, and endowed with amazing power, since without uttering any words it unfolded before my mental vision the hidden meaning of all the incidents related.

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I gradually realized that the lower valley represented Life, which was intended to be the paradise which the lady behind me and I had found it, if only it were not fouled at its source, as in the case of the three children who drank of the *muddied* stream, or spoiled by indulgence in injudicious pleasures, or in the all-absorbing pursuit of wealth, etc. Need I state that the forest path led through the valley of death, and how utterly astounded I was to learn that death, so far from being a terrible event beset with all sorts of horrors, such as most men depict it to themselves, was in reality a delightful experience? In this connexion I may

mention that the light fleecy clouds which had caused me some uneasiness in the morning represented the ever-lurking "dread of something after death" which at intervals mars the happiness of the brightest lives; these clouds disappeared completely over the valley of death, just as man's groundless fears of death and the hereafter will vanish whenever he realizes the truth. Another point in the explanation which might be overlooked is that the thorny tracks alongside the paths in the lower valley as well as in the wood denoted the sickness suffering and sorrow that come ever and anon into all men's lives, and which are often—though less commonly than is generally supposed—present at death. I was led to take this fact in conjunction with another already stated, viz. that in the valley of death only were my movements directed and not under my own control, so that here alone did it seem as if people might be compelled to tread the thorny track. I perceived quite clearly that sickness and suffering were largely preventable if man would but ascertain and obey the laws of his nature, while if all the error and misery for which he has only himself to blame—due to his own folly, culpable ignorance, laziness, vices, etc.—were suppressed by correcting such faults, the amount of evil left behind in the world would only lend a zest to life.

But if sickness and suffering can be prevented to such a large extent this must result in a great diminution in the number of those saddest and most painful forms of death, where strong, healthy adults are called upon to pass unexpectedly from the full brightness of active vigorous life, into dark unknown regions filled with vague, shadowy, and therefore most appalling horrors: although a certain number of such premature adult deaths must occur no matter how men strive to prevent them, yet surely the above representation of the hereafter should rob it of its power to produce intense mental anguish, while physical pain can be relieved by appropriate measures. Children of tender years whose deaths, as in the case of those in the narrative, are so frequently the result of ignorance or carelessness in those responsible for their birth and training, may be said to be entirely free from mental agony when dying, thereby illustrating the truth of the statement that the "sense of death is most in its apprehension", while as regards the deaths of persons advanced in years, these form the natural cessation of life and are usually calm and peaceful, unattended by severe suffering either mental or physical. It appeared to me, too, that sorrow, being chiefly connected with the deaths of those dear to us, was for the most part a self-inflicted torment, and as concerns all those deluded people who voluntarily tread the thorny road by practising superstitious asceticism of any kind—monastic life, vows of celibacy, fastings, prayer "wrestlings", penances, and such-like inanities—they are simply punishing themselves for their folly in believing that these contemptible efforts

to curry favour with God could be anything but utterly futile, wholly reprehensible, and an actual insult to the deity. This strangely-lit picture of human woe overwhelmed me with the conviction that these evils, sickness, suffering, fearsome death with its dread agony and sorrow, are *not*, as falsely represented by most religious creeds, either disciplinary measures or punishments for sin, inflicted by a strict and exacting God, but that *in reality they form no intrinsic part in the scheme of things, and only exist because men subordinate the ruling of their divine reason to the pursuit of unworthy objects.*

Another matter, which I now fully understand, was the curious reference to Miss X——. Although I know very little of this lady's life, yet I have good reason for stating that she was a very earnest Christian, and as such held until the day of her death the common Christian belief, that all who reject this creed, "have no hope and are without God in the world" (Eph. 2. 12). Not only did I see the obvious reference to her death in the information that she "had passed along this road before", but I also perceived clearly that this incident had a deeper significance. The fact that I, a lifelong agnostic, had traversed the valley of death by the same path and had apparently gone through exactly the same experiences as a good type of orthodox Christian, completely reassured me that those outside the religious fold have quite as good prospects in the hereafter, and can look forward thereto with just as much hope and confidence as the most ardent religious devotee.

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The reception of all these explanations of the day's events had prevented my making any personal application of them, but now I reasoned out in my mind that, having attained the valley of death I should therefore be considered as numbered amongst the dead, and then the sorrowful idea occurred to me that the news of my death would be sent home to a sister who has always been more to me than all the world, and that she would imagine I had passed through a horrible experience dying alone in a foreign country: moreover, having been a religious sceptic all my adult life, she might conclude that I was possibly suffering all the tortures reserved by the Christian's God for those who refuse to accept this false and cruel creed—and I knew that one or two intimate friends would think likewise. Yet I was quite unable to let her know that all was well with me, and that she should be full of joy, for not only had I enjoyed the most delightful time but the same was destined for her also in the future: I recognized, however, that I had unconsciously passed to "the undiscover'd country from whose bourn no traveller returns", consequently it seemed impossible to send her this consolation, and so I felt unutterably sad and depressed.

All this time I had been looking dreamily across the path up

which the lady had passed, but now I unwittingly turned full face towards the rays of the setting sun, and immediately became aware that they were beginning to permeate me in the same way that I had observed them to do with the lady, and there arose within me the same intense yearning which she had displayed to rush forward and become merged in this marvellous sunshine; every fibre of my being seemed imbued with this consuming desire, but the subsidiary feeling was, I think, in my case, anxious expectancy as much as rapturous delight. As I stood up, therefore, and started forward, a clear ringing voice spoke out, saying very decisively, "you must not pass *this time* into the glory of the Living Sun", and instantaneously the yearning feeling subsided like a wave of the sea, leaving me for the moment with a bitter sense of the very keenest disappointment. This, however, was rapidly displaced by a feeling of extreme happiness, for although the voice ceased, yet it was intimated in the same manner as before, that I must return by the way I had come, and tell my sister, friends, and everybody, the experiences I had passed through, and particularly these wonderful truths which had been revealed to me thereby: *That man is intended to make the most of life, and to enjoy to the full every reasonable pleasure therein without any fear of being taken to account for so doing. That granting compliance with this injunction he can well nigh vanquish sickness and suffering, and need not have the slightest dread of death for himself, nor sorrow in the case of those near and dear to him, because the passage through the valley of death is thoroughly enjoyable. And lastly, although the final consummation involves the loss of our individuality, yet from what I was permitted to observe in the case of the lady, and to experience partially myself, this represents the most complete and perfect state of happiness attainable.*

Overflowing with joy I turned back down the path thinking how delightful it would be to make known these tidings so strange yet so simple and productive of happiness. On the way down it seemed to me that the wood resented my return, for the trees appeared to be swaying about although there was no wind, and moreover, they emitted that mournful moaning sound which one often hears amongst trees at night; the roses and honeysuckle were all closed up, the air had lost its lovely fresh perfume, while the light effects through the wood had faded owing to the sun having nearly set. Full of my own happy thoughts, however, I paid little heed to anything else, and soon arrived at the little plank bridge which I crossed, and when I was on the road I turned round to look once more up that memorable path. The last rays of the setting sun were just disappearing, and I repeated the words of the voice: "I must not pass *this time* into the glory of the Living Sun," adding almost as if it were a prayer, "but next time, surely", and the rays seemed to flicker an assent ere they finally vanished out of sight.

There was no definite awakening as out of sleep—I seemed simply to remain for some little time entranced by my experience, but quite consciously watching, through the glazed verandah door, the growing signs of dawn in the sky, until presently my reverie was interrupted: the room door opened and in the dim light there appeared the figure of one of the hospital nuns, who, with her mask-like face, frowzy mediæval garb, and graven image slung round her neck, seemed the very embodiment of that superstitious self-righteous ecclesiasticism—accursed by Jesus of old—which effectually screens this benighted world from the rays of the Living Sun. I realized with a shock that such superstitious idolaters have neither “eyes to see, nor ears to hear, nor hearts to understand”, divine truth, and that any attempt to reveal it to them would only be like “casting pearls before swine”; the simple unsupported representation of truth if related would only seem to her, and to the whole priest-ridden world, as merely a sick man’s fancy, or perhaps one of Satan’s wiles to mislead the unwary, so I kept silence while she performed her routine of taking my temperature (99.4°) and pulse rate (74), and then passed on her round. But this silence could not continue—my mind had been too profoundly stirred by the incident, and so I eagerly confided it to friends in order to see its effect on them: they were all greatly interested, most kind and considerate, but I could clearly see that they had really very little idea of its tremendous significance—it was to them a very vivid dream, nothing more, whilst to me it was then, and has continued ever since to be, a most wonderful revelation of eternal truth. The following account may perhaps provide the necessary details for deciding that this representation of what we may expect after death is indeed TRUE, or at least more worthy of acceptance than any other similar testimony recorded in the biblical revelation or elsewhere.

TRUE

The above narrative was written in the hospital at the time, and can be relied on as a correct record of what actually occurred: it was sent home to the sister mentioned therein, who replied at once in a very characteristic letter, followed later by a more considered one, in her lifelong rôle of best and wisest of counsellors. An extract from the first runs: “I am not the least bit sceptical about your ‘dream’, ‘vision’, ‘revelation’, call it what you will—it is true, it is a fact. All such visions mean the same thing—the coming into consciousness of our higher, capable-of-being-glorified, even here and now, selves.” The following quotation is from her second letter: “I feel a little sorry you are going to publish all about your strangely-received revelations of truth, and would find it hard to give reasons, but I will tell you what I think will happen. Nine persons out of every ten who read it will scoff,

and the remaining tenth will believe because they have had similar experiences, and some of them will probably write and tell you so. . . . Let the mode of communication differ as it may the message conveyed is always fundamentally and essentially the same—the valuelessness of all earthly possessions and pleasures except for passing help and enjoyment, the needlessness of fear in any event of life or death, and the conviction, firm and clear, that behind, beyond, and above the tragedy, comedy, and sordid middle ground “let us eat and drink for to-morrow we die” sort of business going on on our little globe, some great grand purpose is rolling itself out, which some day, somehow, somewhere we shall at last comprehend. This force behind all things may be Christ’s “Father in heaven”, your “Living Sun”, or that nice American writer’s “Spirit of Life” (Trine), the name matters little, provided struggling, groping, despairing humanity *feels* it has something to hold on to.” This letter confirmed my own natural repugnance to publishing such a matter, and I took no further action about it, until, at last, nine years later this sister’s fatal illness brought the subject up for discussion between us: although as firmly impressed as ever with the truth of the vision, yet experience of its recital showed that its publication would, as she said, be futile, and so we could only decide to leave this question open, she agreeing, in the event of its publication at any time, to accept its dedication as a token of her parting approval.¹

Some time after she had crossed the little bridge I found my old hospital manuscript among her papers, and determined to devote my whole attention to ascertaining whether the truth of this matter could be proved and demonstrated for the benefit of all honest enquirers. At first the task seemed impossible, but very slowly, step by step, the separation of TRUE religion from its attendant falsehood and superstition was effected, as previously described in full (Parts II and III). This pure spiritual religion accords with rational interpretation of scientific facts, and is entirely free from the endless ecclesiastical errors that are the main cause of the

¹ “She being dead yet speaketh”, in accordance with her bedside motto, quoted on p. 255. The first part of this book is altogether outside her scope, and represents merely the writer’s own scientific point of view, but the remaining three parts were written with her hand guiding the pen, and represent broadly the views that would have been endorsed by one who, unaccompanied, followed the stream of truth all through life. It is here very earnestly requested that those who know, or think they know, the joint authors, will leave the delicacy to refrain from discussing the question of their identity with anyone, and so help to preserve the much-desired incognito of those whose personality is of no consequence, but whose message is all important, and alone concerns the reader. The publication of this book discharges what seemed a solemn obligation, imposed by the vision with its subsequent confirmation by and of TRUE religion. The personal details furnished are unfortunately necessary for a complete understanding of the circumstances, and in this connection the practically normal temperature and pulse rate recorded, and the fact that I was permitted to interview visitors, should prevent the vision being attributed to “fever”.

world's worst disorders past and present; moreover, it is True because it teaches that God is spirit and not a person, it is Rational because it substitutes our God-given reason in place of credulous faith in blind guides and their false doctrines, it is Universal because it presents fundamental religious truth, common to all the creeds, in universally acceptable form, and it is Exalting because it elevates us into perfect union with the universal spirit now and through all eternity. Being therefore in all respects TRUE, this spiritual and scientific religion—this knowledge of God the spirit in spirit and in truth—is *an authoritative and reliable standard by which to test everything that claims to be religious truth*; its value in this respect has been shown by contrasting its divine truth with the crude superstitions, debasing errors, and evil fruits involved in pagan creeds, in the worship of the cruel jealous god Jehovah, in the corrupt Buddhist idolatry of the present day, and in the Christolatry of the Christian Churches all through the Christian era.

Having thus established and proved our sure standard it is a very simple matter to compare with it the above vision of life, death, and the hereafter, and thus demonstrate that this is indeed an actual illustration of all that TRUE religion represents, both from the scientific and spiritual standpoints: (t) the Living Sun distilling the clear water of the stream of truth for the refreshment and revival of all, filling the whole landscape with its joyous life-giving rays till earth and air seemed actually alive, and lighting up even the valley of death, showing that life and death are indeed one—surely this Sun is the exact equivalent of primary radiation, or the nebular sun, evolving into all kinds of matter and energy including life in every shape and every degree of intelligence—surely it represents truly the impersonal universal spirit, creating, pervading, and controlling all things. (r) Further, the picture of an ordinary human brain receiving and understanding rational brain-waves from the Living Sun is obviously in accord, both with the scientific fact that man's intellectual powers, dominated by reason, are derived from the source of all energy, and with the corresponding religious truths that Reason was not only with, but actually was, the Creative Spirit "in the beginning", and that man being born of this rational spirit, is the same spirit, and consequently capable of rational co-operation and union therewith. (u) The universality of this rational Living Sun is shown by the fact that Reason is "the light which lighteth every man coming into the world", filling all alike with its glorious sunshine, except those who deliberately reject its influence, and thus spoil their lives by preventable ill-health of mind or body, vicious pleasures, lust of wealth, etc., or who by placing unreasoning faith in "blind guides" are induced to tread the thorny way of morbid religious ideas and practices, from all which truth-prevailing reason—man's universal guide—is intended to make men free. (e) Finally, the complete

transfiguration of a human being by the marvellous rays of the Living Sun is a most exalting representation of man's ultimate destiny: it shows to scientific philosophers the natural completion of the human life cycle, ending, as it began, in the source of all light and life; it reveals to the oriental mind how Nirvana is attained; and it is for the true follower of Jesus a visible fulfilment of his parting message, that those who know God the spirit in spirit and in truth, are "one with" this universal spirit in glory everlasting.

We may conclude, then, that this vision is most certainly no extravagant delusion of a disordered brain, nor is it, as priestcraft may suggest, the prompting of an evil spirit designed to lure the "religiously and devoutly disposed" from the bondage of the Church into a life of deceptive spiritual freedom, but on the contrary it is a genuine representation of all the essential truths of TRUE religion.

RATIONAL

In this vision of the here and hereafter there is nothing at all to justify the orthodox encouragement of remorse for sin, horror of death, and dread of eternal punishment, coupled with the teaching that all these can only be averted by compliance with ecclesiastical rules, rites, and sacraments, or by priestly confession, penance, and costly contributions to the Church, or by faith in grossly superstitious creeds, in the ghastly atonement of an innocent victim required by God, in the resurrection of the human body, and in all the irrational ideas contained in what Christendom is drilled into accepting as divinely inspired revelation. On the contrary, the vision, if recognized to be true, dispels these groundless fears, and replaces all this degrading ecclesiastical superstition by a joyful assurance that the knowledge of the only true God, which is life eternal, is the natural inheritance of every rational being, of which we are only deprived by the perversion of our truth-discerning faculty in regard to spiritual matters. Every incident in the narrative illustrates this most important matter by showing that what is called death is simply the appointed method of regaining our lost heritage, as should be evident from the following rational interpretation of the vision.

The clear water of life's stream (Truth) is distilled by the Living Sun (Divine Reason) and refreshes all who drink it pure, but when "Mother Church" gives it to children in a muddied condition, fouled by ecclesiastical errors, these victims are deprived of their birthright, for their truth-discerning reason is blighted at the very outset; if they die before attaining years of discretion they follow the upward path, not for punishment on account of "original sin", but because it is the straight way leading them once more to "behold the face of their Father in heaven". It is very signifi-

cant that the representatives of "Mother Church"—after being shown at their pernicious task of fouling spiritual truth, perverting the minds of children, and driving away those who desire the water pure—are the only persons who make no further appearance on the scene, they are the only ones not seen to tread the sunlit path that leads to the grotto of enlightenment, to the influence of the Living Sun, to the source of all life. These teachers of false religion, the world's "blind guides", have at all times opposed, persecuted, and even murdered the revealers of truth, and are guilty of all those errors which caused the Jewish priests and religious leaders to be cursed as "not of God": it would be useless for them to pass along the sunlit track because they have destroyed their spiritual senses, have deprived themselves of the power to benefit by the rays of the Living Sun, and thus have blotted themselves out of the vision of life eternal. On the other hand the heretic who remonstrated with the Church for fouling the water of life met with a much better fate, even though he made the mistake of turning away from the stream: he sought to solve the problem of life and death by observing all things in heaven and earth, but in vain, and when he tried to rectify his error by again seeking the pure stream of truth he only discovered its dry bed, with the result that he continued completely ignorant until he was irresistibly led up the path to the grotto of enlightenment, where all was made so indescribably clear. Those who reject traditional superstition, and seek instead what is rational, will, no doubt, incur the wrath of the Church, and suffer persecution in priest-ridden countries, and may seem to fail in their object in life, yet, since this vision is true, they have nothing to fear otherwise, either here, or in death and the hereafter.

But this is not the case with the generality of mankind, who either tread thorny paths through blind faith in false creeds, or else, in revolt against this error, apply themselves entirely to unworthy pursuits, to acquiring wealth, fame, or influence, to idle luxury, or to vicious pleasures, without ever employing their divine truth-discerning power for any exalting purpose: the result is that they are judged by their own reason—what is called their "guilty conscience" makes them feel themselves unworthy of any higher life—consequently when they in turn drift down to the dry bed of life's reviving stream, they are compelled very reluctantly, and with much fear and trembling, to cross the little bridge, and so pass out of the scene. A shrewd orthodox friend made the characteristically Christian criticism that the vision was incomplete because it did not reveal the fate of these people; his religious training apparently led him to expect that the little path should have been flanked by the bottomless pit on one side, and licked by the flames of Hell on the other, while Christians of his own communion would pass triumphantly along it, elbowing all others aside to perdition. But as regards these offenders in

the vision, were they not sufficiently punished by their failure to get the best out of this life, by their irrational groundless fears of the hereafter, and perhaps by painfully traversing the changeable wood along the thorny track, though this at least was sunlit? One thing seems certain, this path smooth or thorny leads only to the grotto and to the potent influence of the Living Sun, the rays of which are evidently capable of enlightening all who enter the grotto, thus preparing them for final transfiguration. Priest-taught Christians may believe the most gruesome revelations regarding death and the hereafter, and may support the Churches which further their own interests by fostering such fears in superstitious minds, but most emphatically there is nothing whatever in this true vision to justify such terrors, while on the contrary there is much to discredit them.

This rational interpretation of the vision may be terminated by drawing special attention to the case of the young lady, which so well illustrates its chief feature, the supremely joyous influence imparted by TRUE religion to life, death, and the hereafter. That she was the living embodiment of TRUE religion is shown, by her being the only one who followed throughout life the path alongside the stream of truth, right to its very source, while her full appreciation of the sunshine of divine reason, and its exhilarating effects, were denoted even at a distance by her uncovering her head to its rays, and by her lively attitude and cheery demeanour. Notwithstanding this keen rational enjoyment of life—so different from the hectic gaiety of the revellers under the tree—and notwithstanding that she was in the full prime of youthful vigour, she displayed not the slightest trepidation on approaching the little bridge, her conduct there showing that she had neither fears, nor doubts, nor even the sceptic's puzzled ignorance concerning what lay beyond: on the contrary, without kneeling in prayer, or even crossing herself, she tripped confidently across the barrier, and faced the steep upward path quite unconcernedly, because like all who have been made free from superstition by TRUE religion, she knew that "life and death are one". Again when she came under observation for the third time, her aspect was still that of complete enjoyment as she emerged from the wood. She was not asked to produce a certificate of absolution and the Church's blessing as a passport, nor a recommendation in the shape of a receipt for treasure spent in masses to deliver her soul from purgatory; she was not required to wash her robes *white* in the blood of an innocent victim (Rev. 7. 14); she had not to prostrate herself before a judgment-seat nor flee in terror from the face of its occupant; she saw no lake of unquenchable fire and brimstone, nor any of the gruesome horrors and grotesque monsters described in the Christian's nightmare revelation of the hereafter. Nothing of the kind! According to the vision the representative of TRUE religion who ignores ecclesiastical misguidance, passes

directly into the final state of perfect bliss, by a process which was seen, and even partially felt, to be one of the most ineffable and indescribable delight. "Joying she lived, she joyed to die", and with joy unspeakable she passed into the glory of the Living Sun.

Such is the rational interpretation of the vision, feebly representing the actual revelation, and the following considerations should leave no doubt that it offers a more reasonable anticipation of what we may expect after death than is generally held at present. A friend who visited me in the hospital the previous afternoon prior to departure for England, and to whom therefore I subsequently sent an account of what happened to me that night, replied as follows: "Your letter was the first I heard of your 'peep into the beyond': you must not be impatient with people who don't see it all as you do. The whole thing seems quite unlike you, and I thought when I read it over first, 'What would you have thought if someone else had told it to you?' I don't know what I think about it. Sometimes I think it was only a very very vivid dream . . . then again I think it is not like any dream however vivid." The question in this quotation is a palpable home-thrust at my pronounced distrust of anything supernatural, especially "revelations" associated with "spirits", which seem to me wholly irrational, since they emanate from imaginary spectres, usually deal with unimportant matters unworthy of supernatural interference, and are totally unreliable, so that they are quite useless for any practical purpose: as proof of this take the following example.

A popular exponent of science aroused tremendous public excitement by suggesting that a girl missing from a country village should be traced by a "medium": accordingly, as announced by flaring headlines in the daily press, a sorceress was sent down to the place, who donned some of the missing girl's clothes, and then went into a "trance", having no doubt previously acquired the common knowledge that the girl had a lover, and that the local river had been dragged without result. As a consequence she announced that another "spirit" had appeared and informed her that the lost girl "had not come over" and enabled the "medium" to see her walking with a companion along a large city street. A couple of days later the papers published in obscure paragraphs that the unfortunate girl's dead body had been found in the river: the eminent spectralist apparently offered no explanation, and the matter was hushed up, but what a flourish of trumpets there would have been amongst the superstitious if the medium had guessed right, and what degrading ideas must such people have of the Supreme Power, the one, the only, the Universal Spirit! Under the Mosaic law these "abominations" were strictly prohibited (Deut. 18. 10-12) and the sorceress was not suffered to live (Exod. 22. 18, R.V.), yet a few—fortunately

very few—distinguished leaders of public opinion at the present day feel no shame in advocating sorcerous practices that are entirely contrary to TRUE spiritual religion, since they are based on complete ignorance of what “spirit” really means, and on the savage witch doctor’s crude notions of the “spirit world”.

The object in referring to all this is to make it quite clear that the above rationally explained vision, which has been shown to embody all the essentials of TRUE religion, has consequently nothing whatever in common with such sorcery, but is in fact as strongly opposed to this as to ecclesiastical superstition; if this is not evident from what has already been said the following statement should be conclusive. This vision deals with no trivial matter, but with the problem of man’s present existence in relation to his future destiny, which is the most important question that can engage his attention, and it answers this with a simple, decisively reassuring message of joy and encouragement to suffering and sorrowing humanity. Unfortunately, though apparently unavoidably, this information is conveyed in the questionable form of a vision, but superstitious people, spectralists, and orthodox believers in divine revelation, cannot object on this score, while rational sceptics may be satisfied by the fact that not only is this true vision itself quite rational and free from any supernatural suggestion, but *it is a clear definite intimation that there cannot possibly be such things as independent “spirits”, since, by an actual object lesson, it illustrates most forcibly our complete reunion with the universal spirit at what we call death.* This agrees with the teaching of science deduced from innumerable examples of cyclic evolution in nature, so beautifully expressed in Ecclesiastes 3—it is what Jesus revealed (pp. 226-7) as he lifted the veil (John 17.) before passing behind it—and it is the truth contained in the dying utterance of Buddha, “life and death are one”. But the spirit which thus “returns to God who gave it” (Eccles. 12. 7), which is united with the universal spirit, cannot be at the beck and call of neurotic “mediums”, to answer foolish questions, perform conjuring tricks, and have its photograph and fingerprints taken. it cannot be hovering round us like a ghost, nor can it be asleep in the tomb of the dead pending resurrection of the vanished dust, nor can it descend into Hell or purgatory, or be in any “abode of disembodied spirits” awaiting a future day of judgment, when “if not found in the book of life it shall be cast into the lake of fire” (Rev. 20. 15).

It is sad that rational men and women, in their ignorance of TRUE religion, should allow themselves to be duped by such debasing superstition, and especially that in their sorrow for their beloved dead, they should put faith in sheer nonsense, instead of relying on what their reason tells them is true: for surely even if the “spirits” of the departed had a separate existence and were able to communicate at all, they would invariably

appear and bring comfort to all heart-broken mourners themselves, instead of only occasionally revealing their presence to hired witches who knew them not in life. It is sadder still to see venerable leaders of thought, crazed with "grief that saps the mind", falling victims to such credulity, and lending their support to what is certainly reprehensible folly, when not actually fraudulent deception. It is saddest of all, and indeed scarcely credible, that for nineteen centuries all the Christian sects, learned theologians, Italian priests claiming infallibility, ecclesiastical dignitaries of all grades, and millions of naturally devout and pious minds, have accepted debasing heathen ideas of a personal god and of the spirit world, as a divine revelation forming part of God's word of truth. It is obvious that if the rational interpretation of the above true vision of life, death, and the hereafter were universally accepted it would put an end to sorcery of all kinds, and would enable blind faith in ecclesiastical superstition and idolatrous ritual to be replaced by TRUE religion.

UNIVERSAL

The extreme simplicity of the vision of TRUE religion renders it universally acceptable by making it intelligible to children and the most simple minded folk. A mother who had recognized the light of the Living Sun illuminating her own mind should be able to tell the story of the shining lady as a beautiful fairy tale, so that it would become a prime favourite with the little ones, who as their minds expand would gradually perceive the wonderful truths underlying it: sooner or later they would appreciate that it is meant to guide us along the stream of truth all through life, and when this fails it points the way across the little bridge; it brightens the path through the wood where no life is, and its truth will only be fully realized when we emerge at the grotto of enlightenment into the full glory of the Living Sun, where, with transcendent joy, all that is truly spiritual within us shall be completely absorbed once more into the only true, rational, universal, eternal Spirit.

The TRUE religion which the vision represents is indeed adapted to all ages and conditions of human life. The young, thirsting for all the joys of life, are given free scope, the only restriction imposed on them being that, in their own and the general interest, they should follow truth by the light of divine Reason, which is the only method of securing a really happy healthy life, and the surest protection against kill-joy vice and dissipation, while the injunction to "make the most of life" should remind them that a full share of work well done, increases the enjoyment of life's pleasures enormously. The middle-aged are apt to become wholly immersed in family cares, or in the *selfish* pursuit of knowledge, wealth, power, etc., all alike leading away from the stream of

spiritual truth, so for them the vision points out that "to make the most of life" means compliance with the truth contained in the golden principle of evolution, "let all men's good be each man's rule". The elderly too, for whom life's serious work is over, are prone to spoil the leisure hours of life's eventide in sorrowing for dead relatives and friends, or regretting their own past youth, failing powers, and approaching dissolution, unless they have grasped the truth of the vision, that these reflections should really cause them joyful feelings of delightful anticipation. And lastly the aged, "full of years" and bowed down with the weight of their infirmities, will most of all realize the truth of this revelation, for they are already imbued with some of that intense yearning—called by a scientific veteran,¹ the "instinct of death", though it is rather the instinct of life eternal—which the vision represents as being so fully and joyfully satisfied by the final transformation. Thus does the Living Sun, "symboling the eternal", flood with its truth-revealing, love-inspired rays, the minds of all, young and old, willing to receive its joyful influence.

In the vision the stream of truth runs clear and free for all, and is not meant to be fouled with superstition by any distributing agents, consequently this true vision must be strenuously opposed by the whole ecclesiastical world which makes its living by selling the water so contaminated. The shrewd orthodox Christian, previously referred to, remarked after hearing an account of the vision, "There is nothing in all that inconsistent with the Christian faith", yet this is certainly not the case in view of the following facts. (1) The Christian belief in a personal god, or trinity comprising carnal elements, to be worshipped according to heathen temple ritual, is entirely contrary to the impersonal spiritual nature of the Living Sun to be communed with "in spirit and in truth": (2) The approach of his own death is said to have caused Christ to sweat blood in his agony, and Paul, the real founder of the Christian faith, regarded death as "the last enemy" to be overcome, while with Christians generally, it is a constant cause of dread for themselves, and of sorrow and mourning in the case of their loved ones (p. 71). In the vision, what we call death is only a nightmare to those without any desire to know spiritual truth, it is the means of enlightenment to genuine seekers after truth, and it does not exist at all for those who follow truth in the light of their divine Reason, because they already know they are one with the only true God, the Living Sun, the Universal Spirit, and such knowledge is eternal life. And (3) the very essence of Christianity is that faith in Christ's atonement procures the salvation of imaginary individual souls which have come into existence no one knows how or when or where, pass into the human body, no one knows how or when or where, pass away therefrom at death, no one knows how or why or where, and

¹ Metchnikoff, *Études sur la nature humaine*, Chap. XI.

continue to live a separate existence of bliss or torture through all eternity, being foredoomed thereto by a god who alone knows how or why or where: all this superstitious ignorance is completely dispelled by the revelation of the Living Sun as the one, the only, the universal spirit that is "over all, and through all, and in us all"—in us all provided we do not wilfully ignore it. *Now there should be no mistake about this matter: it cannot be too emphatically stated that the above are fundamental differences, which are totally irreconcilable.* Nothing infuriated Jesus so much as the attempt on the part of the apostate Jews (John 8. 31, etc.) to combine their pagan ritual and false doctrines with his divine word of truth, and the Christian faith is even more incompatible with the pure teaching of Jesus, of Buddha, of science and philosophy, or in other words with TRUE religion, which is the really essential truth extracted from all these.

Let not man's natural inclination to cling to the child-taught superstitions of his forefathers prevent him applying to his creed the wise Pauline injunction, "Prove all things: hold fast that which is good" (1 Thess. 5 21): in this case the Christian who at the bidding of his Church accepts all the apocalyptic revelations contained in the Bible (pp. 263-4) might ask himself these questions; ignoring Church tradition and comparing quite disinterestedly, on the one hand the above simple natural vision representing the true teaching of Jesus, and on the other the Christian's accepted book of "Revelation" with all its supernatural horrors—which gives the more exalting view of God and his dealings with man, which should be held fast as good, which is really TRUE, and which therefore is more worthy of universal acceptance as a divine revelation? Those who by such honest investigation are led to accept TRUE religion, in preference to their inherited and consequently much cherished family or national faith, need have no regrets if they reflect that they are not really renouncing the truth in their parental creed, but only its superstitions and errors, while loyalty to the tradition of their ancestors is a small matter compared with the sacred duty of transmitting only what is true to their descendants. Surely the deplorable state of the world to-day shews the futility of present superstitious creeds, and the urgent need for the universal adoption and practical application of genuine TRUE religion as represented by the above simple vision.

EXALTING

"Verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation" (Mark 8. 12). We commenced this part of our subject with the statement (p. 263) that miraculous divine revelations find no place in TRUE religion or science: this is well expressed in a letter previously cited (p. 272): "I do not believe," it runs,

"that to Christ, to Buddha, or any other person, has been given the mission of revealing Truth to humanity, but I do believe that the truth is a progressive thing to which every honest sincere word, deed, and life adds its quota, and that this advancing mass is gradually crushing aside and behind it, all falsehood, superstition and mystery, with their attendant wrongs, injustice and misery." This exactly coincided with the present writer's own view, and caused him for nine years to put aside the injunction in the vision to publish its message, and only to comply with this when a further period of ten years' earnest meditation in solitary retirement convinced him that TRUE religion—being derived from all sources of natural revelation, scientific, philosophic, poetic, as well as purely religious thought, being the collected output of human reason and therefore in no way individual or miraculous—is indeed such an advancing mass of truth only unfortunately prevented from crushing out error and superstition by obstructive influences, chiefly the perverse ecclesiastical education of children. But just because TRUE religion is thus divested of all irrational miraculous elements and attractive worship of deified persons, it seems as if it could never be accepted by a naturally idolatrous world, priest-fed on superstition and ritual from very early times; "except ye see signs and wonders ye will in no wise believe" (John 4. 18) is as true to-day as it was of old. Nevertheless if it can be clearly shown that, behind this visionary representation of TRUE religion, there lies an exceptional, yet perfectly rational, power, inspiring, revealing, and explaining it, this should satisfy both the superstitious sign-seeker and the strictly rational truth-seeker alike.

For this purpose let us take the independent and valuable opinion of a brainy, hard-bitten naval officer with a psychological bent, who, having asked permission to read the account of the vision shortly after it was first written, returned the manuscript with the following most unexpected appreciation: "Your vision is to me a beautiful poem both in matter and form, and I am not surprised at the effect it has had on you. . . . That it represents the truth is entirely obvious to me. . . . It is a subtly woven picture from your sub-conscious mind, in which your childhood's impressions, and the aspirations and sympathies of your maturity, are embodied, but so exceptional is such a functioning of the sub-conscious mind, and so purposeful in its nature this example of it, that we may accept it as a 'revelation', at least in a partial sense of the word—that is how I look upon it." This seems common sense, for certainly my ordinary conscious rational mind had nothing to do with staging the various incidents of the vision, nor had I the slightest suspicion while taking part in them that they had any application to life generally, while the idea of death as a pleasant experience was so entirely foreign to my mind, that I could scarcely realize it even after what seemed an actual personal

experience of the fact : I am quite convinced therefore that if the vision had been interrupted before its explanation had been imparted, I should never have suspected that there was any ulterior meaning in it, and most assuredly could never have reasoned out for myself the altogether strange and appropriate interpretation supplied to me. Neither an unusually clever brain, nor a mind obsessed by religious ideas, nor temporary mental derangement due to fever poison, nor the action of drugs, nor even Satanic or sorcerous influences, could have suddenly produced such a detailed, consistently TRUE representation of life, death, and the hereafter, and even if they could, not one of these conditions was really present at the time : we are then forced to adopt the psychologist's suggestion that all the incidents of the vision, and their subsequent wordless interpretation were products of the sub-conscious mind. But if this sub-conscious mind produced something my friends recognized as "quite unlike me" (p. 278), something not subjected to my usual rational control yet able to stand subsequent close scrutiny, something with a definite design and purpose which had to be revealed and explained in detail to the ordinary perceptive mind—then the sub-conscious mind must have been guided to this strange result, as the vision itself indicates, by *some* rational enlightening influence *that knew the sublime truth beforehand*, thus enabling it to be presented as a delightful vision, and this in turn to be interpreted, without words, but in a profoundly impressive manner, the whole process suggesting an exceptional revelation of truth, such as demands universal acceptance if found to fulfil the other necessary conditions (pp. 264).

It may be said then that this vision has very strong claims to be regarded as a genuine revelation, while its convincing "sign from heaven" consists in the fact that it is inherently TRUE, as shown by the following summary : (T) To prove its truth we took the latest pronouncement of science regarding primary radiation, and harnessing this to a comprehensive evolutionary principle (p. 18) followed its working through all the stages of creation, and found it generally applicable, first to all forms of inanimate matter from hailstones to revolving universes, and then to life in every shape from microbes to rational human beings, and further found that every particle of matter, living or dead, being under the influence of cyclic development, is destined to return once more to the source from which it emanated. Having thus established the nature of the Supreme Power, recognized its universally rational method of working, and determined our own relation thereto, we next simply stripped the creeds, ancient and modern, of all their superstitious, theatrical, and commercial ecclesiasticism, so as to separate the pure spiritual teaching of their founders, derived from the earliest oriental philosophy (p. 67) ; on comparison this was found to coincide in the main with the scientific conclusions, thus permitting the formulation

of really TRUE religion, consisting of the most exalting spiritual truth, reasoned out from scientific data, yet so simple and practical as to be fit for universal acceptance. And this TRUE religion, so obtained, was in turn found to be most accurately represented by the original interpretation of the vision (p. 274) received many years previously, both alike being TRUE expressions regarding the impersonal supreme power and man's relation thereto—thus mutually confirming each other. As all the various incidents of this vision were, without any aid from the conscious rational mind, arranged so as to convey this most important truth, and as their interpretation was likewise disclosed by no deliberate mental process, we seem compelled to regard this true vision as a revelation or sign from the source of all truth, from "the only true God", whose "word is truth". (R) The vision anticipated and indicated the elucidation of rational views of religion, creed, code, and ceremonial, replacing personal gods of all kinds by the one spirit God dominated by Reason, substituting the one divine law of love-inspired reason in place of endless ecclesiastical doctrines and ordinances, and rejecting useless heathen rites and ceremonies in favour of rational communion in spirit and in truth—surely then a representation accurately foreshadowing all this may be regarded as a sign or expression of that divine Reason which was "in the beginning with God and which is God". (U) The vision has been shown to apply to all ages and conditions of mankind, and as it faithfully represents TRUE religion, which is universally applicable to all communities, peoples, and nations in this and all other worlds (Chapter IX), it shares this universality, and may well therefore have emanated as a sign from the Universal spirit which is "above all, and through all and in us all". (E) This TRUE visionary representation of life, death, and the hereafter "makes us free" from past regrets, from the anguish of sorrow and fear of death, from the imaginary biblical horrors of a last judgment, and eternal torment, and replaces these with a clear view of how "good will be the final goal of ill"—a view so exalting and blissful that it hall-marks the vision as being indeed a genuine "sign from heaven". All these considerations seem to indicate clearly that this message of love, joy, and peace to all mankind is a fruit of purely spiritual origin, the sub-conscious mind merely occupying the place of a broadcaster, receiving, verifying, and then transmitting a delightful revelation to every rational human being, from the source of all divine inspiration, from the rays of the Living Sun itself.

Those who may still consider this revelation unsatisfactory because it is merely a vision, should reflect that the main truth contained therein could not be conveyed in any other way, since it would require someone to "rise from the dead" and relate his experience, and this unconvincing miracle (Luke 16. 31), contrary to TRUE religion (p. 239), is in fact absolutely impossible (p. 279). Further, it is very important for the bigoted rationalist

to note that, while the vision did indeed prompt the working out of TRUE religion as formulated in Part III, yet this is quite independent of any vision or revelations: it depends mainly (t) on scientific data concerning the primary radiating essence of all matter and energy, (r) on evolutionary processes, regulated with a mathematical precision, indicating that reason dominates the impersonal creative power, (u) on the identity of this with the religious and philosophic concept of the universal creative spirit, and (e) on the similar rational creative working of the human mind establishing its kinship with the supreme creative spirit, from which it originated, with which it can co-operate, and to which it seems destined to return, and this strictly natural character of TRUE religion should satisfy those to whom its visionary representation makes no appeal, even though apparently in all respects TRUE.

This naturally suggests a final objection to the vision, since it may be quite reasonably urged that there is no necessity for such a special revelation if it simply confirms what has already been independently discovered by man concerning his origin and ultimate destiny: no doubt this is so, and though the prevailing creeds have become very corrupt through ecclesiastical error and superstition, yet this could be remedied by adopting TRUE religion on its own merits, ignoring its visionary counterpart entirely; but in all religious systems, and in philosophy generally, there runs a constant strain of pessimism, and the joyous message of this vision seems specially designed to protect TRUE religion from this fault, and to compensate for its lack of popular attractions, in the shape of a personal god, idolatrous ceremonies, and priestly ministrations. Science and philosophy, wary of being trapped into superstitious errors, are loath to admit that such a carefully graduated and purposeful process as universal evolution implies an impersonal creative power endowed not only with reason, but with goodwill indicating divine love, consequently anything like spiritual joy is "hidden from the wise and understanding". Neither is there anything of this exaltingly joyful nature in heathen creeds, which are on the contrary full of spiritual terrors both before and after death: the essence of Buddhism, too, is the rejection of all joy and desire in this life as the price to be paid for eternal peace, while the Christ-worshipper, whose creed is purely pagan in its sacrifice-exacting god, surpasses the pagan in his accepted revelation of the horrors of the hereafter; and so the miserable uncertainty pervading this short earthly life drives man to seek consolation through blind faith in some personal god or false creed, in sacrifice for sin, in a Church or sect purveying superstition, or in rank sorcery. Yet what all reasonable men desire most fervently is joyful freedom and perfect happiness in this life, with an authoritative assurance of their continuance hereafter, and surely never in all the world's history has there been a time, as at present, of so much widespread hardship and unrest—the aftermath of the most Christian war—

when consequently such an assurance is very urgently needed. The revelation contained in the vision is then exceptionally opportune, and its message duly appropriate, for the injunction to make the most of life by constantly following the stream of truth bare-headed to the rays of love-inspired reason, is the surest way to reduce life's woes to the minimum and enhance its pleasures to the utmost.

*This TRUE spiritual religion, so simply represented by the vision, is positively the only permanent joy-inspiring influence life has to offer, and if we were born and bred to live it quite naturally and habitually, in every thought, word, and deed, as ought to be the case with everyone, then the solemn mockery of idolatrous worship, superstitious creeds, and sacramental observances, which the Churches sell as religion, would be quite discredited. TRUE religion is indeed no mere selfish individual soul-saving creed. To allow our real conscious reasoning selves to be illuminated by the rays of the Living Sun (Divine Reason), leading us into all truth, is our genuine bond of union, not only with the eternal rational creative spirit, but with all that has been, all that is, all that ever shall be, imbued with the same spirit—united with all that *has been* so imbued, it is thus our bond of union with the dead, and is the only true way by which we are in touch with them, since they are reunited with the universal rational spirit, which we can consciously feel controlling all our thoughts and actions—united with all that *is* so imbued, TRUE religion is thus our bond of union with the living, and is the only true way to "Love God and our neighbour as ourselves", since spiritual affinity is the very essence of pure love—and united with all that ever *shall* be so imbued, this bond of union is thus, finally, the only true way to turn death into life, making us joint heirs of all future existence, since it is indeed that knowledge of the "only true God whom to know is life eternal".*

There only remains one last general consideration. If, in spite of all the proofs advanced, what is here claimed to be TRUE religion, should in reality be false, if Jesus lied or was mistaken when he said, "God is spirit", if science be wrong in confirming this, by tracing all matter and energy through evolution from the source of primary radiation or universal spirit, if oriental philosophy erred in its concept of the Absolute All in All, if the Old Testament preacher mocked when he stated that man's "spirit shall return unto God who gave it," if the above vision representing such spiritual reunion as transcendently joyful be a mere delusion, and if, finally, God be really a personal deity seated on a throne in the sky, waiting to judge the living and the dead, as maintained in the Christian revelation and official creed—then, we ask, could this judge blame or punish the creatures he endowed with reason for accepting such apparently reasonable truth derived from so many seemingly reliable sources, in preference to believing endless, wholly irrational myths, miracles, legends, and ecclesiastical super-

stition of all kinds? On the other hand, if TRUE religion really deserves the title, it offers a satisfactory solution of the most important human problems, a practical remedy for most of the ills of life, and a blissful assurance that by habitually doing God's will in God's true way we are thus "one with" the divine spirit for all eternity. But even if death means utter annihilation, still it would be sound policy to make the most of our short existence as enjoined by the vision: thus we see that in any event, and whatever be our ultimate fate, the consistent follower of TRUE religion should be relatively happy in this life, and at least free from all superstitious fears regarding death and the hereafter.

In this connection it seems fitting to conclude this book with the words and quotation written by her to whom it is dedicated, at the time she became aware of her approaching entry into the glory of the Living Sun: "My dream," she wrote, "has always been healthy, wholesome, happy life for all, happy oneself, and for that reason helping others to be wholesomely happy too. And it *is* true, and I *will* believe it—even if I cannot live it—spite of all the pessimists in the world. Men and women *will* be happy when they join hands to brush away once for all, like so much fog or smoke, everything that is false and untrue, and welcome the Light which is dimly beginning to show itself to humanity's ever-growing intelligence":

"Great it is to believe the dream
When we stand in youth by the starry stream
But a greater thing is to live life through
And say at the end, 'The dream is TRUE'!"

—Author unknown.

AFTERWORD

THIS IS A WORLD APPEAL

For each individual—to get the most out of his own life and to make the lives of his family and associates far brighter by the real joy of living, and helping others to live T,R,U,E religion, (p. 255), in which church and creeds, priests and prayers play no part at all.

For all parents, guardians of children, and instructors in schools and colleges—to shield those under their care from all priestly and sectarian influence, and to insist on their being trained in the principles of T,R,U,E religion, until fit to act for themselves in this matter.

For all priests, missionaries, and ecclesiastical agents of every kind—to turn their hearts and minds towards T,R,U,E religion, and cease propagating superstitious faiths, sectarian strife, and heathen ritual.

For His Most Gracious Majesty the King—to replace his ambiguous title, "Defender of the Faith" (Fidei defensor), by the far nobler designation, "Defender of the truth" (Veritatis defensor), thus intimating to all his loyal subjects that the secular laws and state religion, prevailing throughout his world-wide dominions, must, by his royal will, be established as far as possible on a perfectly T,R,U,E basis.

For all kings, princes, governors, judges, and responsible officials everywhere—to exercise the powers and perform the duties of their positions in strict conformity with the principles of T,R,U,E religion.

For all nations, peoples, and communities of various kinds in all countries—to determine that the whole of their affairs, national, political, social, and religious, shall be regulated and carried out in accordance with the spirit of T,R,U,E religion.

For the League of Nations—to facilitate the accomplishment of its numerous arduous tasks by encouraging in every possible way the universal adoption of T,R,U,E religion, which alone can make war impossible (p. 245), and enable all international questions to be settled amicably (p. 180).

And this appeal is most earnestly made to all in the name of

“ THE ONLY TRUE GOD ”—

- “ The heavenly Father ” (of Jesus),
- “ The Light of the world ” (of Buddha),
- “ ~~Allāh~~ ilah Allah ”¹ (of Mohammed),
- The Creator Spirit (of primitive man and true Theology),
- The ethereal essence of all energy and matter (of Scientific research)
- “ The Absolute all in all ” (of Philosophic thought),
- “ The Living Sun ” (of Poetic vision),—



Life and Light.
 Love and Joy,
 Peace and bliss,
 Eternal,
 Eternal in the highest.

¹ “ God the one true God.”